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August 2002

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MAXIMUM POP

JEFF PORCARO
TRIBUTE TO A STUDIO GIANT

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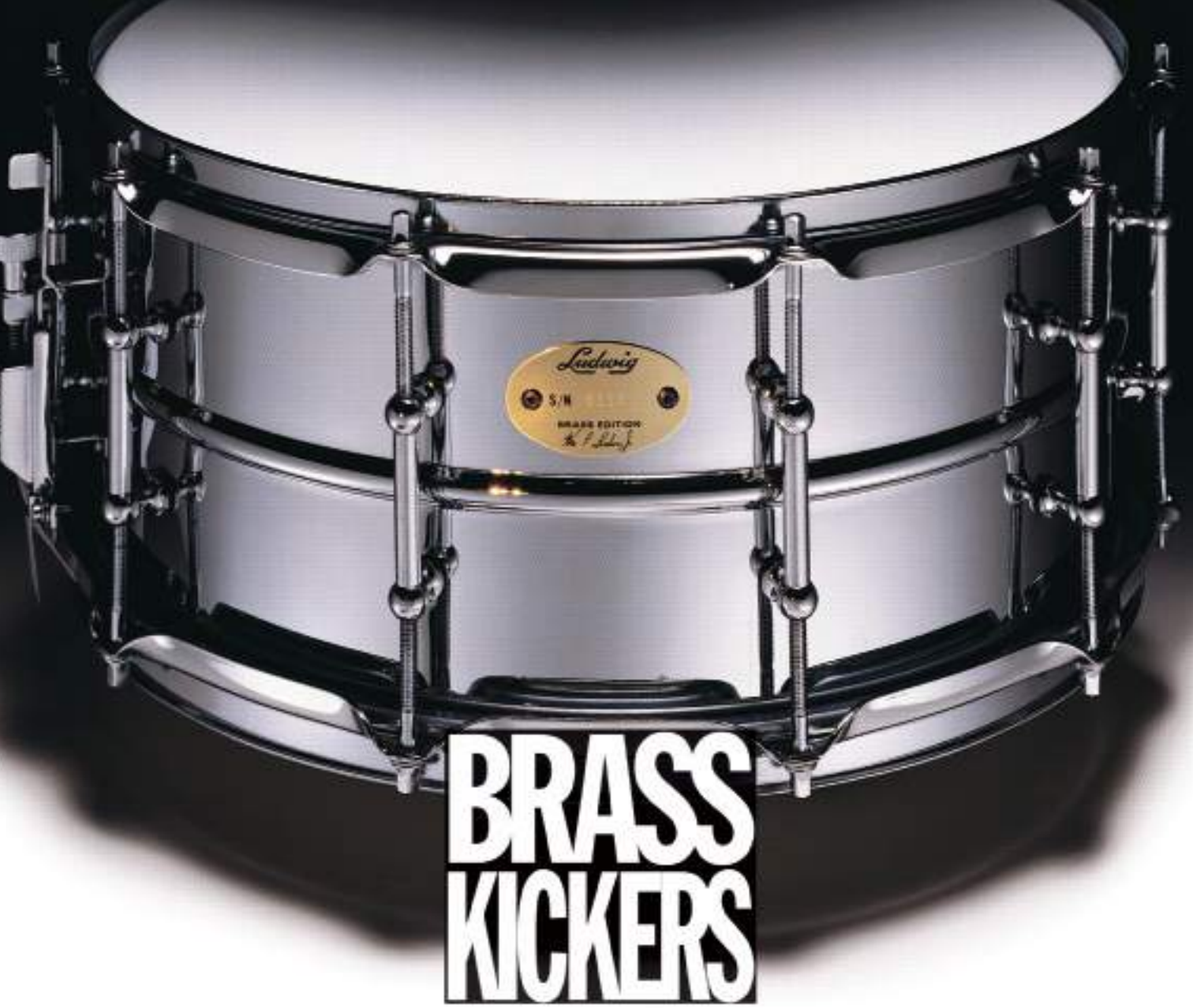

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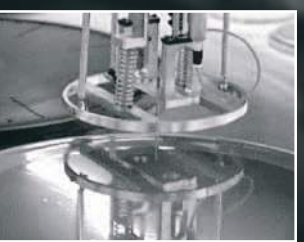

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"Mike clams so rarely," exclaims Goo Goo Dolls' John Rzeznik, "when it happens, I almost crap my pants!" Personal hygiene issues aside, the band's new smash hit, *Gutterflower*, certainly verifies Malinin's rock-solid rep.
by Waleed Rashidi

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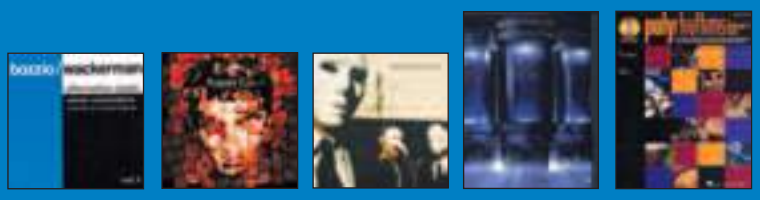

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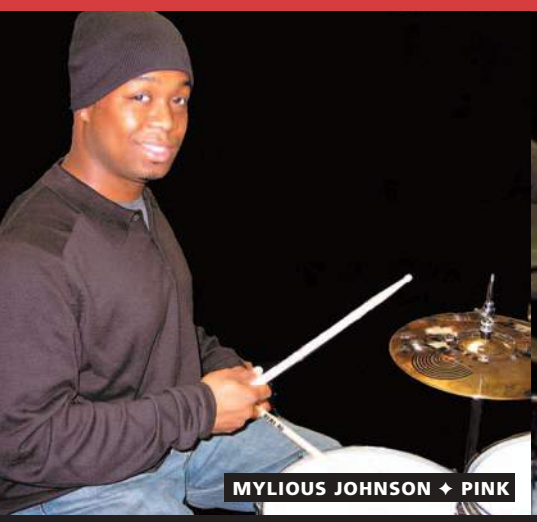

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A Teacher Remembered

Not long ago, one of the finest drum teachers I've ever known passed away. His name was Carl Wolf, and though relatively unknown outside of the northeast, he was an inspiration to all who studied with him during a teaching career that spanned over forty years.

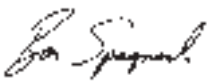
My association with Carl began in the mid-'50s as an eight-year-old beginning drum student. During the ensuing five years I spent under his expert guidance, Carl supplied me with a foundation I've been grateful for throughout my career. That foundation included not only the essentials of proper technique, rudiments, reading, and independence, but discipline, musicianship, and professionalism as well.

Along with his knowledge of all facets of drumming, Carl was one of the most skillful *motivators* I've ever known. I can clearly recall being so inspired by his approach during a lesson that I'd willingly spend hours practicing what I'd been shown. His sincere concern for all of his students, and his level of enthusiasm as you progressed, were exhilarating. It was his natural ability to expertly instruct *and* motivate that resulted in an astounding number of students who later went on to have lengthy careers as professionals.

I also recall that Carl could be quite a taskmaster. When you finally made it to the top of his student waiting list, you played by *his* rules. We'd be told not to bother coming back for another lesson if we hadn't mastered the previous one. Any attempts to sneak a poorly prepared lesson past him were unfailingly futile. And finally, if you weren't totally prepared to commit to untold *hours* of serious practice right from the onset, he didn't want you as a student.

Was his approach a pressure-cooker situation for those of us who came under his tutelage? Sure it was! And though you didn't always like it, you *always* knew that it was done in your best interests, forcing you to perfect his teachings, reach your full potential, and strive to meet his expectations of you. Carl would gladly give you a hundred percent. But he always expected—*demanded*—a hundred percent from you in return.

Over the years, hundreds of students passed through Carl Wolf's drum studio. Many of us who spent our very formative years with the man still speak of him fondly, and with nothing but the highest praise. Carl was an important and influential figure in our musical lives, and we owe him a true debt of gratitude. He'll be dearly missed by every drummer who was privileged to study with him.



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CONTRIBUTING WRITERS: Michael Bettine, Robyn Flans, Burt Korall, Rick Mattingly, Ken Micallef, Mark Parsons, Mike Haid, Robin Tolleson, Lauren Vogel Weiss, T. Bruce Wittet.

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Mike Portnoy

I've been a Dream Theater fan for a couple of years now. Your article on Mike Portnoy was outstanding, and although I have already seen his "Siamese Monster" drumkit on his Web site, the picture in the May *MD* is awesome and now graces my wall!

Mike has become a huge influence on me and my playing. His double bass technique and usage of cymbal rhythms are unique. It brought a huge smile to my face when I got home from school and saw Mike on the cover of *MD*. I live off this magazine!

Nic
via Internet

Over the past couple of years, as I got involved in different styles of music and drumming, I began to see Mike Portnoy as a guy who just wanted to show how many notes he could play in a single measure. When I bought *Six Degrees Of Inner Turbulence*, however, my opinion changed. This is clearly a drummer who's focusing more on the *musical* side of things. The long list of inspirations included in your May interview with Mike illustrate how he has come to be such a wonderful player. So kudos to Mike Portnoy and Dream Theater, and to *Modern Drummer* for once again opening my eyes to a different side of drumming.

Ryan Sessions
via Internet

Bobby Rondinelli

As a professional drummer/educator from Long Island I was proud to see your May feature on Bobby Rondinelli. While L.I. has always been a breeding ground for great drummers and world-renowned teachers, there are few finer or more well-rounded than Bobby. Oftentimes the drummers with the most chops are not the ones with the most feel, and vice versa. Bobby is one of an extremely rare breed who possesses equal amounts of both. He has the ability to play the most intricate

Educational Opportunities For 2002

Your May article on educational opportunities left off a key school. Belmont University is Nashville's main music school. I study under Chester Thompson, Brian Fullen, Chris Norton, and Todd London. Three of those guys are big enough that they've been in your magazine multiple times. We are on Music Row and are heavily connected to the scene here.

Josh Cellan
Nashville, TN

Why did you neglect to include Mason Gross School of the Arts at Rutgers University in New Brunswick, New Jersey? The percussion faculty at the school is outstanding. She-e Wu is recognized as one of the world's greatest marimbists and teachers. Dennis DeLucia is one of the biggest names in the drum corps world. Ralph Peterson, the jazz drum instructor, is a simply amazing player, and all of the jazz drummers here say he's an incredible teacher. Furthermore, Mason Gross is only about forty-five minutes from New York City, making it an ideal location.

Leigh Winik
via Internet

Your article omitted the leading school for Latin percussion: The Harbor Conservatory for the Performing Arts. The curriculum ranges from folkloric to contemporary salsa and Latin jazz. Instruction is available for conga, bongo, timbales, and drumset. The faculty includes Johnny Almendra, Jose Madera, Louis Bauzo, and George Delgado. Students demonstrating advanced ability may participate in Harbor Ensembles, which study and rehearse the original arrangements of such great Latin artists as Rene Hernandez, Ray Santos, and Tito Puente.

We also have an equally strong classical and jazz program. And, through an arrangement with Empire State College and other local universities, students may acquire college credits for their studies at the Harbor.

Nina Olson
Director of Development/Publicity
The Harbor Conservatory
New York, NY

I'm disappointed at not having The University of the Arts included on your list. We are the only university in the nation devoted exclusively to the visual, performing, and media arts. Our drum faculty includes Carl Allen, Bob Brosh, Orlando Haddad, Joe Nero, Jimmy Paxson, Marlon Simon, and myself—all of whom have extensive professional touring and recording experience in a wide range of musical styles.

The university is located in downtown Philadelphia on the "Avenue of the Arts," with nineteen professional concert halls, clubs, and theaters within four blocks. We have thirty-two different performance ensembles involving many different musical genres. We also offer extensive master classes and clinics by guest artists, along with Drum Days and a Summer Jazz Camp.

Instruction includes private lessons for all four years, and although study of other percussion is encouraged, students can major in only drumset if they choose. Our equipment and facilities are second to none, and our curriculum is contemporary and challenging.

Marc Dicciani
Director, School of Music
University of the Arts
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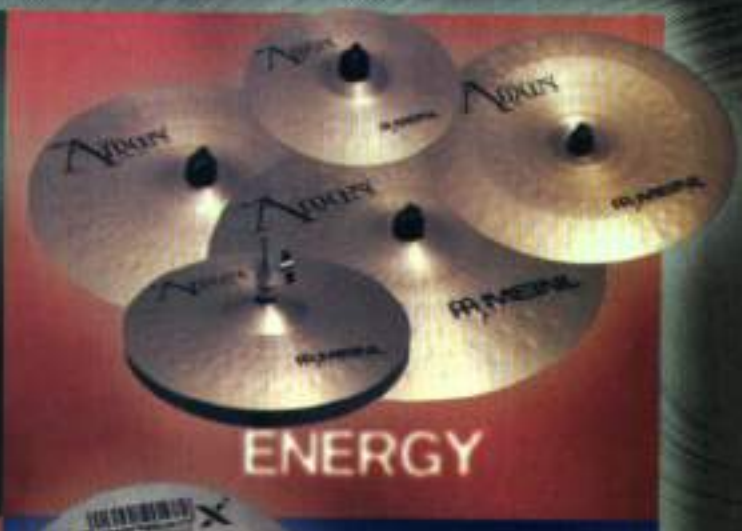

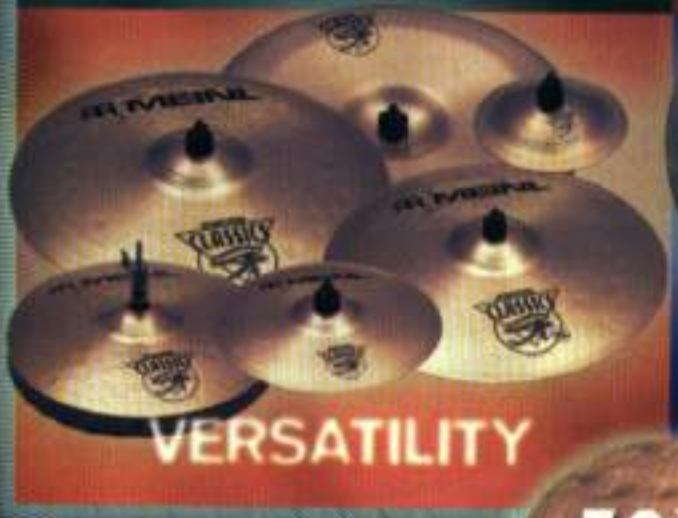

John „Jabo" Starks
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Nick D'Virgilio
Spock's Beard

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patterns, odd subdivisions, and polyrhythms—all with spontaneity and (most importantly) *groove*. He can also flip the coin and make the simplest things sound cool.

Many drummers—particularly those in the heavy rock genre—tend to rest on their laurels. Bobby never seems to run out of fresh ideas to experiment and push the envelope with. His playing—especially live—is quite simply awe-inspiring, and his accolades are long overdue.

Gary Worrell
via Internet

I want to tell you how much I enjoyed the Bobby Rondinelli article. I use his book with my students. I appreciate the fact that he is a teacher and makes time for his students along with his busy touring schedule. I really respect the man. Good job!

Rob Leytham
via Internet

Teaching Special-Needs Students

Thanks for Joe Nevolo's great article on teaching students with special needs. I have one student with learning disabilities, and another who is only five years old. The teaching methods Mr. Nevolo described have really helped me accommodate the needs of these students. After just one lesson, they could read rhythms and understand what I was teaching *much* better than before.

I really appreciate how *Modern Drummer* strives to put a wide variety of subject matter into every issue. There's always something for everyone. Thanks again.

Ryan DeCook
via Internet

Nick D'Virgilio

Thanks for the story on Nick D'Virgilio in the April 2002 *MD*. While I wish Nick all the best in fulfilling his creative and professional aspirations as a solo artist, I sincerely hope it will not be at the expense of his involvement with Spock's Beard. For this forty-three-year-old drummer who grew up listening to the great prog bands of the '70s, Spock's Beard has excited me like no other band has in many years. Yes, they pay homage to "the old school" with music reminiscent of early Genesis, Yes, Gentle Giant, and other greats. But make no mistake, this band has its own voice, due in large part to the amazing drumming of Mr. D'Virgilio.

Bruce Dunn
London, Ontario, Canada

Remembering Randy Castillo

I'm so sorry to hear that Randy Castillo has passed away. I met a then-unknown Randy at SIR in Hollywood in 1984. Great White was rehearsing for a UK tour, and Randy was rehearsing in an adjacent room with a band called Fire. I remember taking notice of what a solid player he was. Later, when we talked, he was so friendly. He was one musician who became successful on sheer ability instead of a wild lifestyle. I wasn't surprised he eventually did so well.

Randy was the drummer on several Ozzy songs that I sang back-up on. That gave me a chance to hear his "dry" tracks. He was right on the money. Bear in mind, these were brand-new songs, not songs endlessly perfected while touring. Randy had rock-solid meter and powerful and interesting chops. He was also one hell of a nice

OOPS!

The June *MD* failed to credit two photographers. The *Product Close-Up* shots of Istanbul Mehmet cymbals were taken by Jim Esposito. The *Backbeat* shots of all artists at Yamaha's Groove Night and of Joey Heredia at Sabian's Drums Along NAMM were taken by Heinz Kronberger. We apologize for the omissions.

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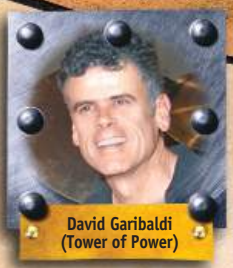
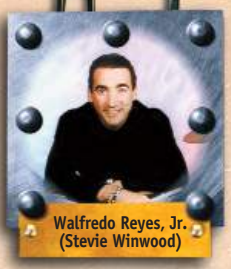
Stephen Perkins (Jane's Addiction)


David Garibaldi (Tower of Power)

Mercedes Lander (Kittie)

Travis Barker (Blink 182)


Walfredo Reyes, Jr. (Stevie Winwood)

Stanton Moore (Galactic)

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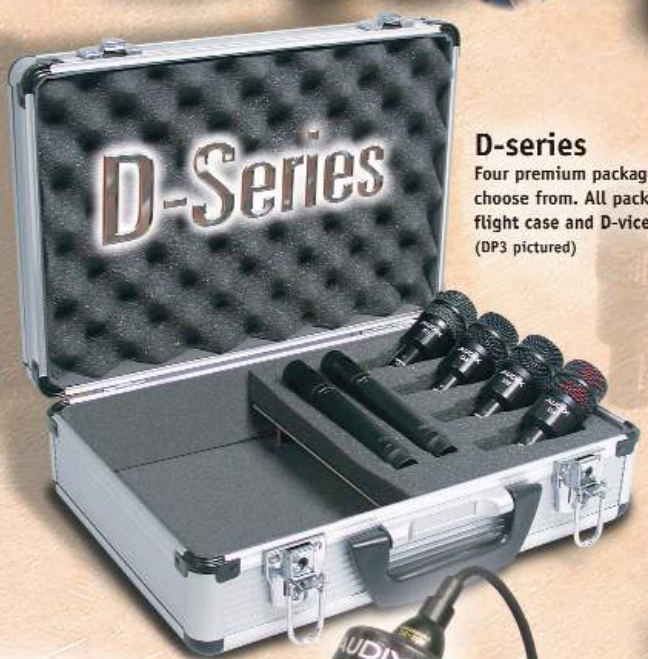

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guy. I never met a single person with a bad thing to say about him, and that's phenomenally rare. It's a damn shame. Why him?

Gary Holland
via Internet

I was shocked to learn of the passing of drumming great Randy Castillo. His contribution to hard rock and heavy metal drumming is unsurpassed. His playing was definitely one of the reasons I picked up a pair of sticks—air drumming to the title song off his first album with Ozzy, *The Ultimate Sin*. My heartfelt condolences go to his family. He was a great drummer and a good man who will be greatly missed. May God bless him.

Tony Heredia
Brooklyn, NY

Louie, Zildjian, And Pro-Mark

Editor's note: In the July Readers' Platform, *John DeChristopher of Zildjian Cymbals wrote to comment on Louie Bellson's name having appeared in the Pro-Mark Timeline ad that ran in the March* MD. *John pointed out that Louie has been a Zildjian drumstick endorser since 1992, and that Louie's appearance in the Pro-Mark ad referred only to the company's archives. Herb Brochstein, founder of Pro-Mark, offers these comments in response to that letter.*

I have known Louie Bellson since 1952. He became one of Pro-Mark's first endorsers around 1960, and remained with us until 1986. Today, we are still very close friends. Neither Louie nor I have allowed the politics of business to interfere with our fifty-year friendship.

Pro-Mark's 45th Anniversary Timeline ad was intended to show the history and success of the company, not to imply that Louie was a current endorser. My respect and admiration for Louie Bellson remains undiminished. He is truly "one of a kind."

Herb Brochstein
Founder, Pro-Mark Drumsticks
Houston, TX

How To Reach Us

Correspondence to *MD*'s *Readers' Platform* may be sent by mail: 12 Old Bridge Road, Cedar Grove, NJ 07009, fax: (973) 239-7139, or email: rvh@moderndrummer.com.

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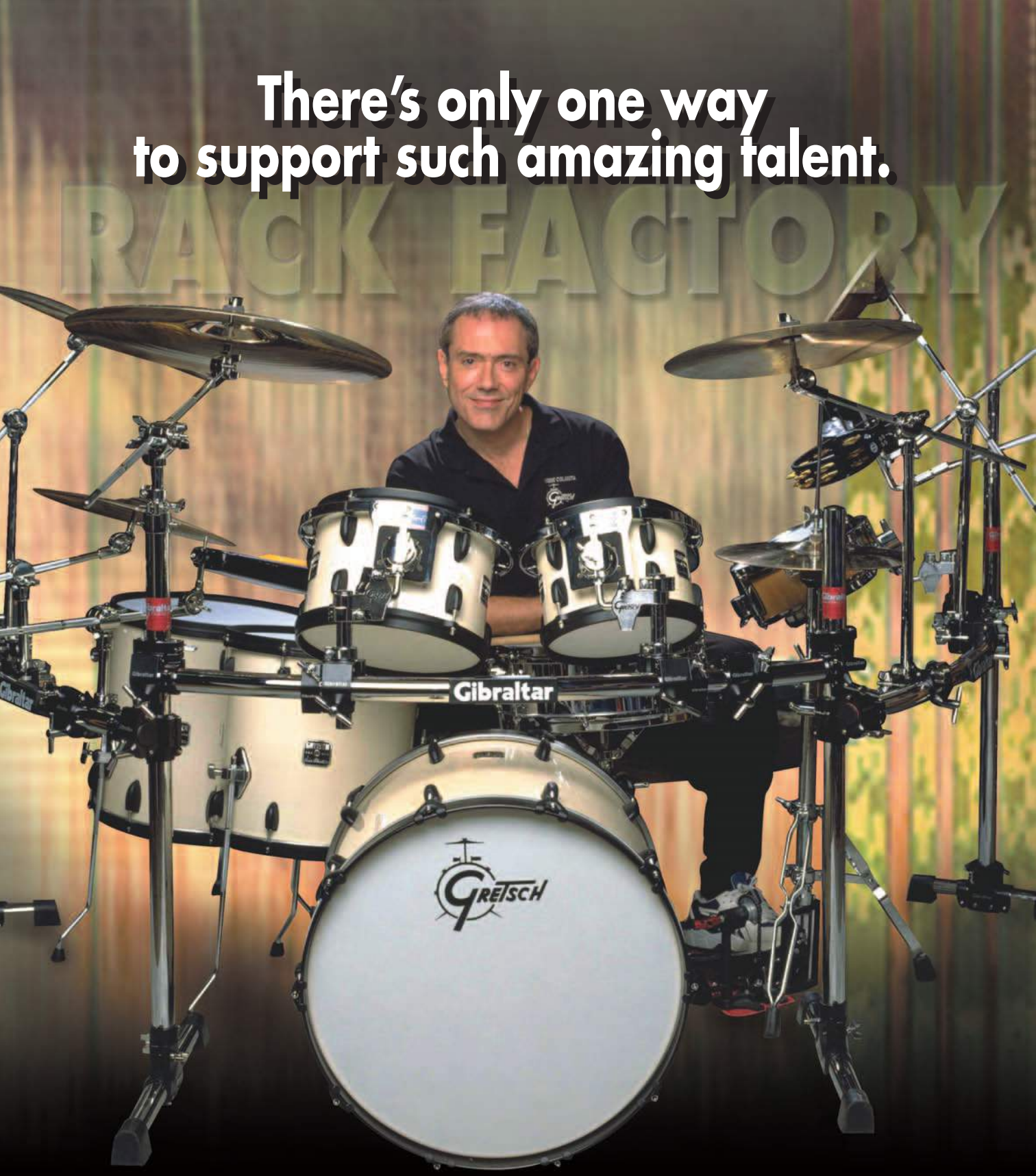

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Dean Butterworth's Martian Snare Drum

Q I'd like to know what type of snare drum you played on Ben Harper's album *Live From Mars*. I'm specifically interested in the track "Alone."

Antonio
via Internet

Alex Solca

A The snare drum I used on all the tracks on Ben Harper's *Live From Mars* album was a 5½x14 maple Tama Starclassic. It was the snare that came with the Starclassic kit I was using for that tour.

Practice Tips From John Riley

Q Your *Art Of Bop Drumming* book is wonderful. I've found my jazz drumming improving quite a bit. I hope to begin working with your other book in the future. I have two questions at the moment.

First, what would be your "top ten" recommendations for solos to transcribe and learn by someone who hasn't transcribed solos very much? Second, in my jazz drumset practice, I'm working on soloing ideas, comping, up-tempo playing, brushwork, learning more tunes, big band reading, and so forth. Please give me your input on these topics, along with any improvements that I could make. Thanks for your wonderful knowledge on jazz.

Brett H.
Moline, IL

A Thanks for your kind words. You sound like you are very serious about music, and I'm glad that *The Art Of Bop Drumming* has been helpful. If I knew your playing, I could answer your inquiries directly. But I'll do my best here.

Regarding your first question: Transcriptions are a fantastic learning tool because they give you so much information. They expand your musical vocabulary, challenge your technique and coordination, and teach you about form and pacing. Learning a transcription will also help open your ears to the issues of touch, sound, and dynamics—not to mention new metric possibilities.

Alex Solca

Playing along with the recording of the song you've transcribed will improve all of the above, *and* it will improve your groove. In my June 2001 *Jazz Drummer's Workshop* column "To Transcribe Or Not To Transcribe," I describe the kinds of transcriptions that have been helpful to me—from tiny phrases to entire songs—and how to go about getting them on paper.

It's often necessary to spend many weeks living with a transcription in order to be able to access the new material. So it's usually best if you pick a tune that totally knocks you out. Otherwise you won't be passionate enough about the music to make the necessary commitment to doing the work. In the long run, the objective isn't to learn a couple of transcriptions and play them on your gigs. The point is to make that material your own. You want to sound like someone who has studied and knows the tradition but has a unique perspective on that tradition. You want to express your own point of view about music.

Recommending tunes to transcribe is tricky. I think you can learn from *everyone*. All jazz drummers need to musically tip their hats to the great players of the past, which makes the selection process all the more difficult. Transcribing their time playing and comping is just as informative (and perhaps even more useful) as transcribing their solos. For me, the core comes from Max Roach, Philly Joe Jones, Roy Haynes, Elvin Jones, and Tony Williams. Someone else might arrive at a similar level of musicality through Chick Webb, Gene Krupa, Buddy Rich, Art Blakey, and Billy Higgins, or through Sid Catlett, Shelly Manne, Jimmy Cobb, Joe Morello, and Jack DeJohnette. The list goes on and on.

As I said above, it takes quite a while to learn and then digest a transcription. The selection of artists I just listed represents years of work. But don't be intimidated. Start with just the first measure of the first solo, and take it from there.

continued on page 18

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John Riley continued from page 16

I recommend that you work on the following songs in the order shown. However, it's possible that if we were in a regular lesson situation, the issues addressed in dealing with any one of these transcriptions might lead us in directions other than what I've outlined below.

Max Roach: solos on "Delilah" and "Parisian Thoroughfare" from *Clifford Brown And Max Roach*.

Philly Joe Jones: time playing/comping and solos from "Straight No Chaser," "Two Base Hit," "Sid's Ahead," and "Billy Boy" from Miles Davis's *Milestones*.

Roy Haynes: time playing/comping and solos from all of his CD *Out Of The Afternoon*.

Elvin Jones: time playing/comping on "Which Hunt" from Wayne Shorter's *Speak No Evil*, solo on "Black Nile" from Wayne Shorter's *Night Dreamer*.

Tony Williams: time playing/comping and solo on the title track from Miles Davis's *Seven Steps To Heaven*, time playing/comping on the title track from Miles' *Nefertiti*.

As for your second question: Everything you say you're already practicing is valuable. The world of drumming is so vast; practicing other styles can also be very productive. That being said, I think you're better off being the master of a couple areas than being "good" at many. I also believe that time spent learning about melody and harmony is essential for any complete musician.

One universal drumming issue you haven't listed in your practice scheme is working on your time feel. Without a flow and a groove, all the transcriptions in the world are meaningless. (See my *JDW* columns "Finding The Groove" [March 1998] and "Holding The Groove" [June 1998].) I recommend practicing everything very slowly at first to get it to flow. Then record yourself playing with people and playing with recordings to see how you really sound. Be honest in your appraisal of your groove, technique, creativity, and musicianship.

Good luck. I look forward to hearing you someday.

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A Classic Quote From MD's Past

"One of the biggest misconceptions is that the almighty record deal is the gold at the end of the rainbow. Actually, that's really when all the trouble begins."—**Mike Portnoy**, August 2000

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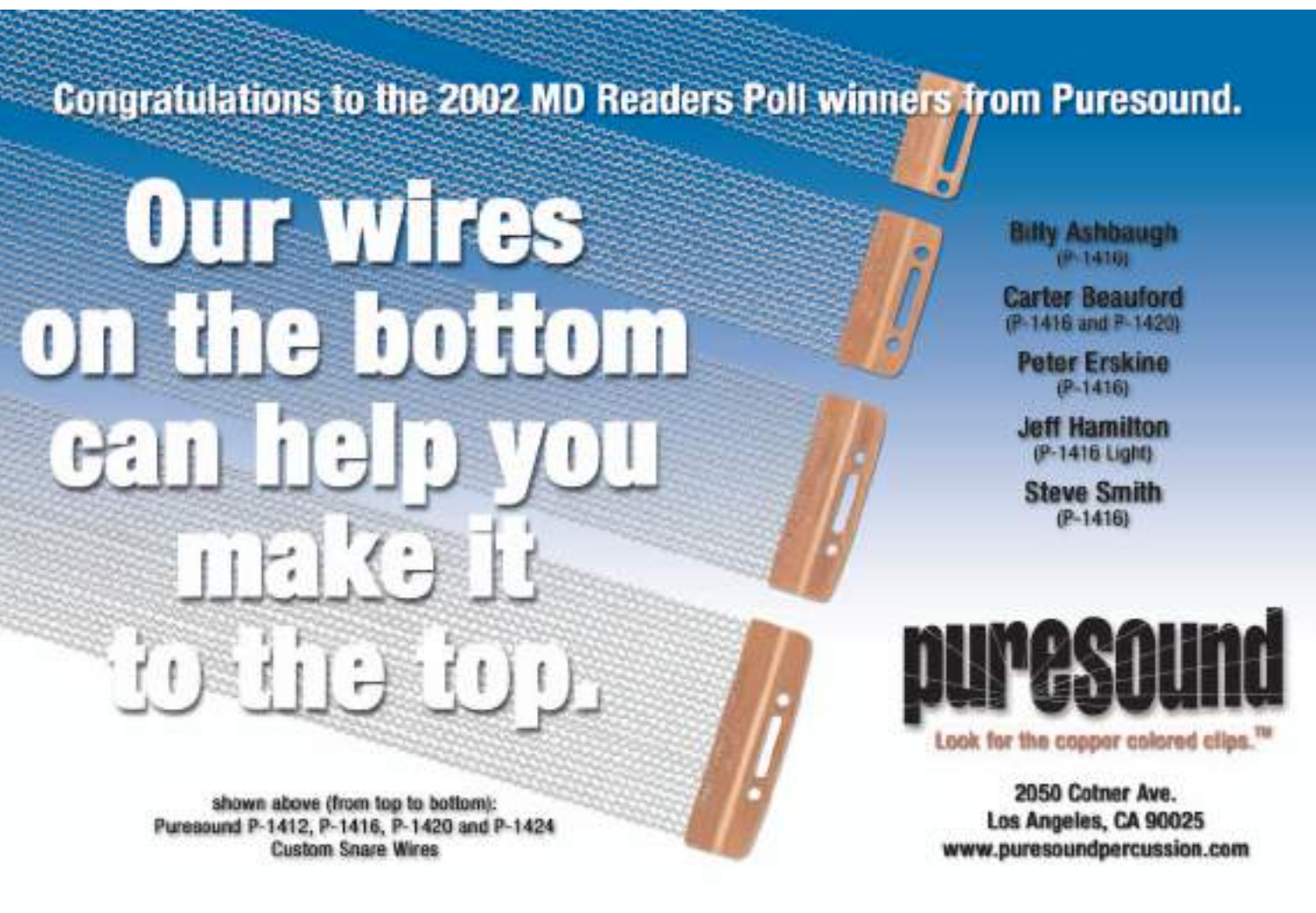

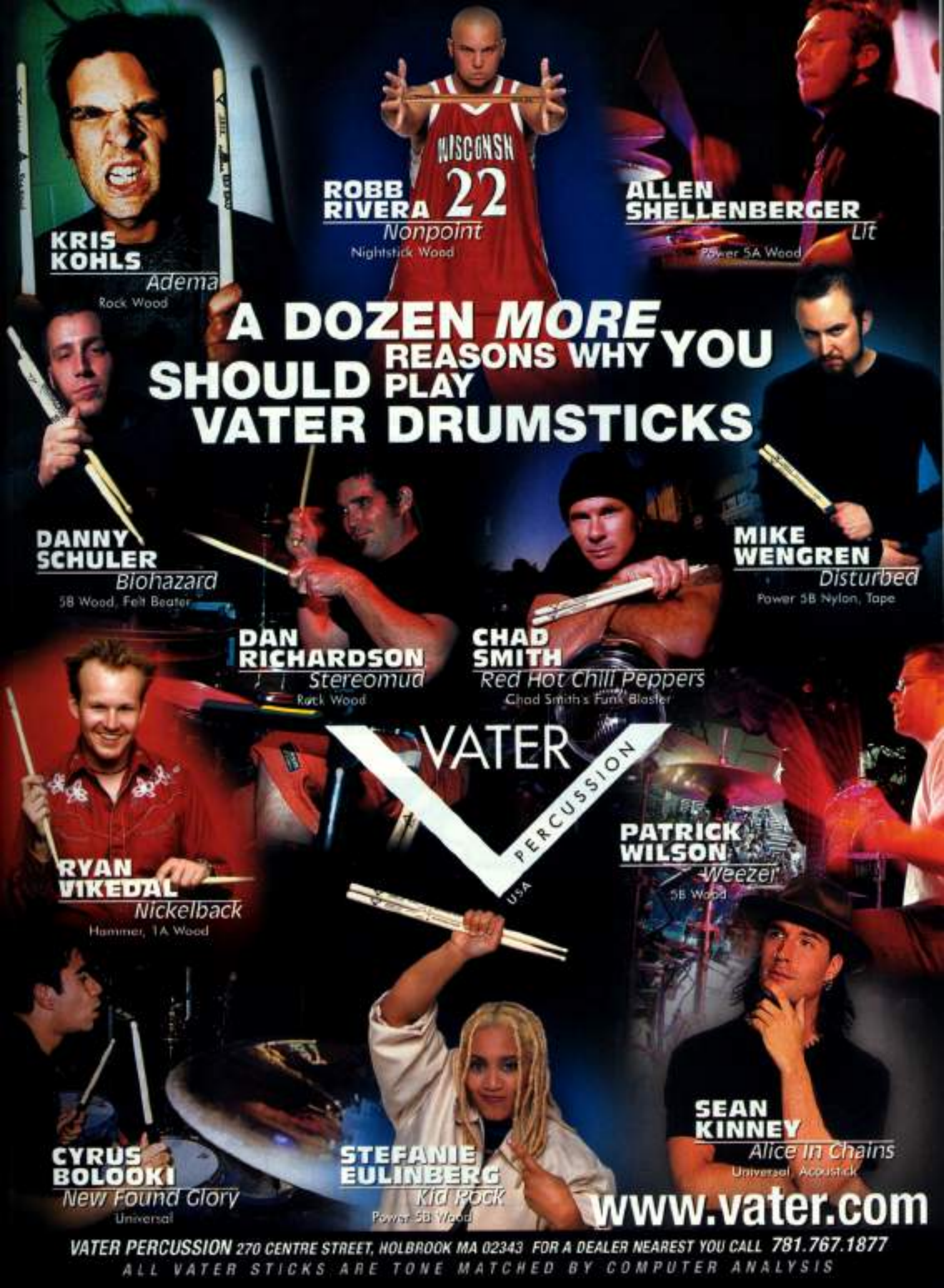

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Vented Snare Drums

Q What's the deal with these new vented snare drums with multiple holes in their shells? They seem to be the hottest thing to come along in the drumming community since synthetic drumheads. I understand how they can benefit players who play loudly, but do they really sound better than regular snare drums (particularly at quiet sound levels)? How does the venting affect ring and sustain?

Jason W. Parcell
Charlotte, NC

A Whether vented snare drums sound "better" than a standard model is largely a matter of personal taste and perception. And there is, no doubt, a certain amount of trendiness to the concept, based on some of the hot players using such drums.

In real terms, venting a snare allows a greater-than-usual amount of air to escape when the drum is struck. The theory is that this prevents air from being trapped inside the drum. Trapped air resists the movement of the drumheads. (Think of what happens when you hit a basketball with your hand.) When the free movement of the heads is impeded, you can get a choked sound from the drum. Venting is also said to provide a quicker response and greater projection, since the sound can "get out of the drum" more rapidly. And, with all other factors being equal, venting also tends to reduce ring and sustain.

As you suggest, this effect is most dramatic at high volume levels. Snare drums have been performing perfectly well at low to moderate volume levels for over a hundred years with only minimal venting. And, in fact, the vast majority of today's "normally" vented snare drums meet even contemporary volume requirements just fine. That being said, extra venting is certainly a viable design option for those who seek its particular benefits.

Mystery Gretsch Drums

Q I own two Gretsch drums: a 1948 24" bass drum and a 1947 13" rack tom. Both drums feature 3-ply shell construction and white marine pearl coverings. The bass drum has a copper-colored badge (with an airhole) and no mounting hardware of any kind. The 13" tom has a tin-looking badge with a tack through it, and has a "vise"-like arm that seems to attach to the rim of the bass drum for mounting. The tom rims have no holes; they're attached to the shell with small claws.

I've scoured the Internet for any info with no luck. Might these drums be vintage Broadkasters?

Richard Cuellar
Portland, OR

A *MD* drum historian Harry Cangany replies, "They are indeed Broadkasters. In the late 1940s only the high-end snare drums and cocktail drums had die-cast hoops with 'ears' and holes for lug bolts. All other drums, including other models of snare drums, used the single-flange/clips system you see on your 13" tom.

"Gretsch toms used either a hoop mount (like yours) or a rail-mount holder. Your drums look very nice. Have fun with them."

Zildjian & Cie History

Q I'm curious about the history of A. Zildjian & Cie cymbals. I have an older Zildjian cymbal with this marking stamped in it. The stamp has a star inside a half moon with "Made in the USA" under it, then some Turkish lettering, then "A. Zildjian & Cie," then "Constantinople," then "cymbal."

The cymbal is a 16" thin crash with a shimmery sound. I've examined the recent A. Zildjian & Cie reissues, and there is a similarity with the ringed hammering patterns and general look and feel. But my old cymbal has a brass-ier look, feel, and smell, and a different shine to it.

I know Zildjian used the A. Zildjian & Cie trademark during the 1930s swing era and earlier, but I've heard it might have been used on cymbals in the 1970s as well (and now, of course, on the new reissues).

The reissues are beautiful, but they couldn't be confused with the earlier ones because of their newness and their black painted lettering. But how does one tell the others apart (if in fact there was a '70s-era A. Zildjian & Cie series)?

Bob Pettit
via Internet

A Our response comes from Colin Schofield, Zildjian vice president of marketing worldwide. He replies, "The A. Zildjian & Cie trademark has been used three times during the company's history. It first came into being shortly after 1905 when Aram Zildjian, having been forced to leave Turkey, set up the Zildjian factory in Bucharest, Rumania. He named the company A. Zildjian & Cie. ('Cie' is the French-language equivalent of the abbreviation for 'Company.') Aram kept this factory going until 1929, by which point he had successfully completed the transfer of the company to his nephew Avedis in the USA.

"Aram Zildjian's Rumanian-made cymbals were widely distributed in the US by the Gretsch Company between 1905 and 1929. So the majority of the Zildjian cymbals played by American drummers in the early 1900s bore the A. Zildjian & Cie trademark. To our knowledge there are very few cymbals still remaining from this time period. Once the US factory was up and run-

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Chad Smith

Years playing – 32

Band – Red Hot Chili Peppers

Concerts – Lost count after 5,216

Last tour – 24 countries

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Favorite venue – Red Square, Moscow, Russia

Largest attendance – 350,000 Woodstock '94

Musical influence – My brother, Brad

1 Sonically Matched cymbal set

Milton Worthington

Years playing – Almost a whole year

Band – Sooky & the Insomniacs

Concerts – Brother's high school dance

Last tour – Hometown

48 kilometers on the family van

Favorite venue – Churchill Boy's Academy

Largest attendance – Almost 90

Musical influence – Chad Smith

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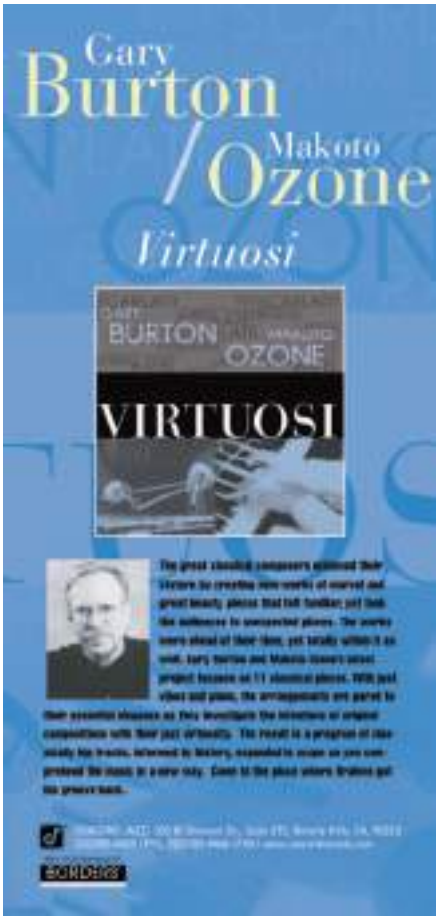

ning, Avedis reverted to the original Avedis Zildjian Company trademark.

"The A. Zildjian & Cie trademark was introduced a second time in the early 1970s, when the company invented the 'Brilliant' finishing process. The A. Zildjian & Cie trademark was stamped on all Brilliant finish A Zildjian cymbals through 1987. By that time Zildjian had introduced numerous new lines in addition to the core A Zildjian line, and it was felt that having too many lines and trademarks was becoming confusing to the consumer. So from 1987 onwards, the standard Avedis Zildjian Company trademark was used on *all* A Zildjian cymbals, whether Brilliant finish or not.

"From your description of your cymbal and its trademark, I think that we can safely say that it's a Brilliant-finish cymbal manufactured between 1970 and 1987. We can definitely confirm that it was not made any earlier than 1970.

"The A. Zildjian & Cie trademark was reintroduced in 2000 with the launch of the A. Zildjian & Cie Vintage cymbals. Armand Zildjian, who personally designed all these 'new' cymbals, felt that use of the A. Zildjian & Cie trademark would convey the spirit of these vintage models, which capture the sound of the earliest Zildjian cymbals made in the USA."

Triggers And Sound Modules

Q I've been looking for triggers and a module for some time now, and I'm leaning towards ddrum triggers and a Roland TD-10 module. I'd hate to spend the money and find out later that there is a better combination. I'll take any and all info you can give me.

Raymond Irving
via Internet

A *MD* electronics writer Rick Long responds: "I reviewed the Roland V-Session kit not long ago, so I know something about the TD-10. The icon-based editing alone is reason enough to spend the money on this module. The quality of sounds also make it a worthwhile investment.

"For guidance on triggers to connect your acoustic drums to the module, I contacted Mike Snyder, who is a clinician and design consultant for Roland. Mike was also the founder of the Trigger Perfect company, whose triggers were used by Roland to create the acoustic settings for the TD-10, TD-8, and TD-6 modules. The Trigger Perfect 210 (snare and toms) and 250 (kick) triggers have adjustable pressure, a small footprint touching the head, and replaceable parts, including the trigger element itself. I have no personal experience with these triggers, but since they were used to create the acoustic settings at the factory, I figure they'd work as well as any other choice. For more detailed info and pricing, go to www.triggerperfect.com."

Ludwig Snare Drums

Q I'm "across the pond" in England. I want to buy a Ludwig snare drum because of that amazing combination of crack, depth, resonance, and quality. I think the drum I'm after is the 400, but I'm not sure. Could it be an Acrolite? What is the difference anyway?

Mark McDermott
Leics, England

A According to Ludwig marketing manager Jim Catalano, "The Ludwig LM400 may very well be the one you're seeking. It's one of the most widely used snare drums in the world. Current LM400 models feature ten lugs, a P85 Supra-Phonic strainer, and an aluminum shell with center bead—all chrome plated.

"We also make the LM400B. This is the exact same drum, except that it has a brass shell that is chrome plated. This drum is heavier and offers a similar sound to a Ludwig Black Beauty. Back in the 1950s and '60s the LM400 was made with a brass shell. The LM400B is a remake of that drum.

"The Acrolite drum you mention is a less expensive model. It's an 8-lug drum with an aluminum shell finished in a powder coating called Black Galaxy. All Ludwig snare drums are available in either 5x14 or 6½x14 sizes. You can check them out on our Web site at www.ludwig-drums.com."

Grip And Hi-Hat Options

Q I'm an eighteen-year-old drummer from Sydney, Australia. I've played matched grip ever since I started playing. However, I've recently decided to explore the potential advantages of traditional grip.

I'm also a double kick player who loves to have the hi-hat close. So I normally have my auxiliary bass drum pedal extended to the left of the hi-hat pedal. But playing traditional grip on this setup causes me to brush my

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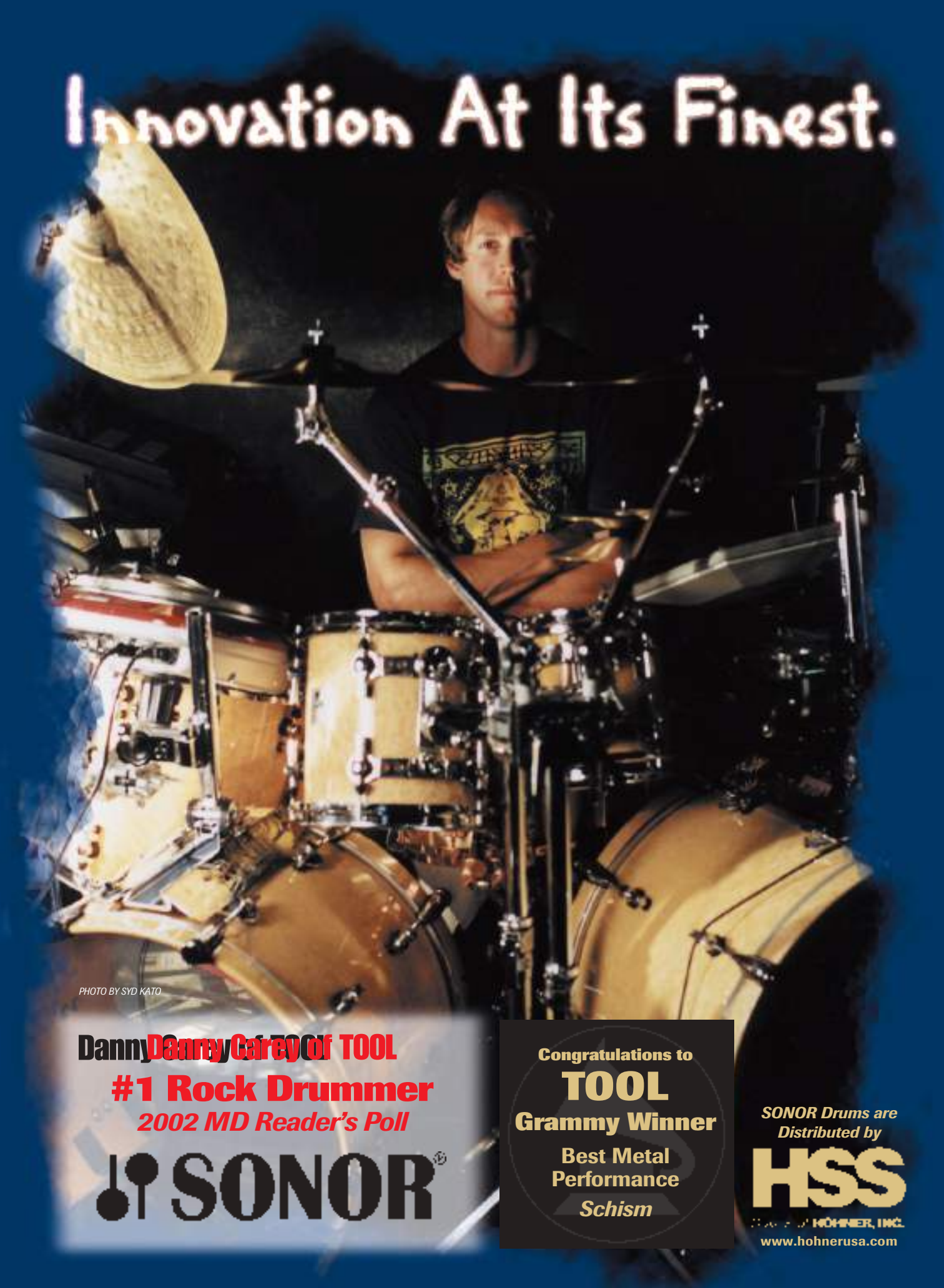
knuckles against the hi-hat. So I've switched the pedal and hi-hat around to the more conventional setup. I have two questions regarding this matter.

First, I've broken my left wrist three times. Is it safe for me to play traditional grip, or should I stick to matched grip? Second, in regards to foot positioning, does having the hi-hat pedal (and thus the hi-hat cymbals) further away pose any potential muscle problems? It seems that everyone has his or her hi-hat further away; am I doing something wrong by wanting it in closer?

Chris
via Internet

A To answer your last question first: The reason most double-pedal or double-bass players put the left bass drum pedal closer and the hi-hat pedal further away is due more to practicality than to any concept of "right" or "wrong." Operating a bass drum takes more foot power than operating a hi-hat pedal does. Therefore, most drummers put the left bass drum pedal in a position that allows their left foot to provide that power conveniently and comfortably. If this sacrifices a little comfort on the hi-hat pedal, so be it.

In the case of a double pedal, it obviously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is easier for the manufacturer to provide a connecting rod only as long as is needed to reach the slave pedal in what had previously been the hi-hat pedal's position.

All that being said, there are a few drummers who do prefer to keep their hi-hat in the traditional position, and who place the left bass drum pedal further to the left. This requires a longer connecting rod, and possibly involves a little tricky maneuvering of the foot *under* that rod when playing the hi-hat pedal.

When you mention hitting your knuckles on the hi-hat because you've put it to the right of the left bass drum pedal, it sounds as if you've actually moved it in even closer than it would normally have been in a traditional single-bass/hi-hat setup. This seems to us to be impractical, not only because of your knuckle problem, but because it would "crowd" the hi-hat cymbals into the playing area of the snare and rack toms. Also, it would bring your left foot unusually close in, which could prove problematic (see below).

As far as we know, there is no physiological risk involved with putting a hi-hat pedal to the left of the left bass drum pedal. The leg bones and muscles at the pelvis do move comfortably in a wide/narrow V-axis, so there's nothing unnatural about opening up the legs just a bit more. Where you can run into trouble is if you try to keep your legs open only in the original V width (used for single-bass/hi-hat playing) and just angle the lower part of the left leg over to reach the "new" pedal position. This puts a very *un*-natural stress on the left knee. So the choice here is: Either open your legs fully enough to reach the leftmost pedal, or don't play a double-pedal setup. Don't try to play a double-pedal setup with a single-pedal leg spread.

As far as danger to your left wrist if you play traditional grip goes: We cannot say for certain that there would be *no* risk. However, if your bones and muscles have healed properly and you take things a little gently at first, you should have no problem. Besides, since you're already skilled at playing matched grip, there's no reason not to use *both* grips, depending on the circumstances. Matched grip provides more power and endurance, and can provide great speed around the kit. Traditional left-hand grip tends to offer greater rebound in that hand for more sensitivity and a better sense of "swing." There is no right or wrong here, either, only a matter of what works best for the application.

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Are you a frustrated double bass drummer who's struggling to get the insane speed and coordination you desire? Well, good news!!! I came across an amazing 1 hour Free Instructional Audio Tape And Special Report a few months ago that's so revealing it will literally warp your mind. From it, **I learned** the single "biggest" double bass mistake drummers make, the 2 specific adjustments to your pedals **no one talks about**, the "secret to economy of motion" that will amaze you, the sure-fire way to get the insane speed and coordination you've always wanted, 3 *foolproof* lessons that reveal a breakthrough in double bass playing that'll make YOUR feet ballistic, and more. . . Yes, FINALLY there's a simple, proven way for you to play your feet **EXACTLY** like your hands at any speed and any time signature you desire. I personally went from typical single strokes to easily mastering insane 100mph double and single strokes, putting flams and rests wherever I wanted to *(in any time signature)*. Finally, my feet are under MY control! I don't expect you to believe me, but if you call today for this **FREE audio tape and report**, *"How play your feet EXACTLY like your hands at any speed and any time signature you desire,"* it will be the smartest thing you've ever done. **Call** the Extreme Double Bass Hotline's Free Recorded Message 24/7, at **Toll Free 1-888-272-8467** and ask for **package A4.** Your free double bass package will be mailed out immediately. *To helping you become a feared double bass player* – © Ron Powers

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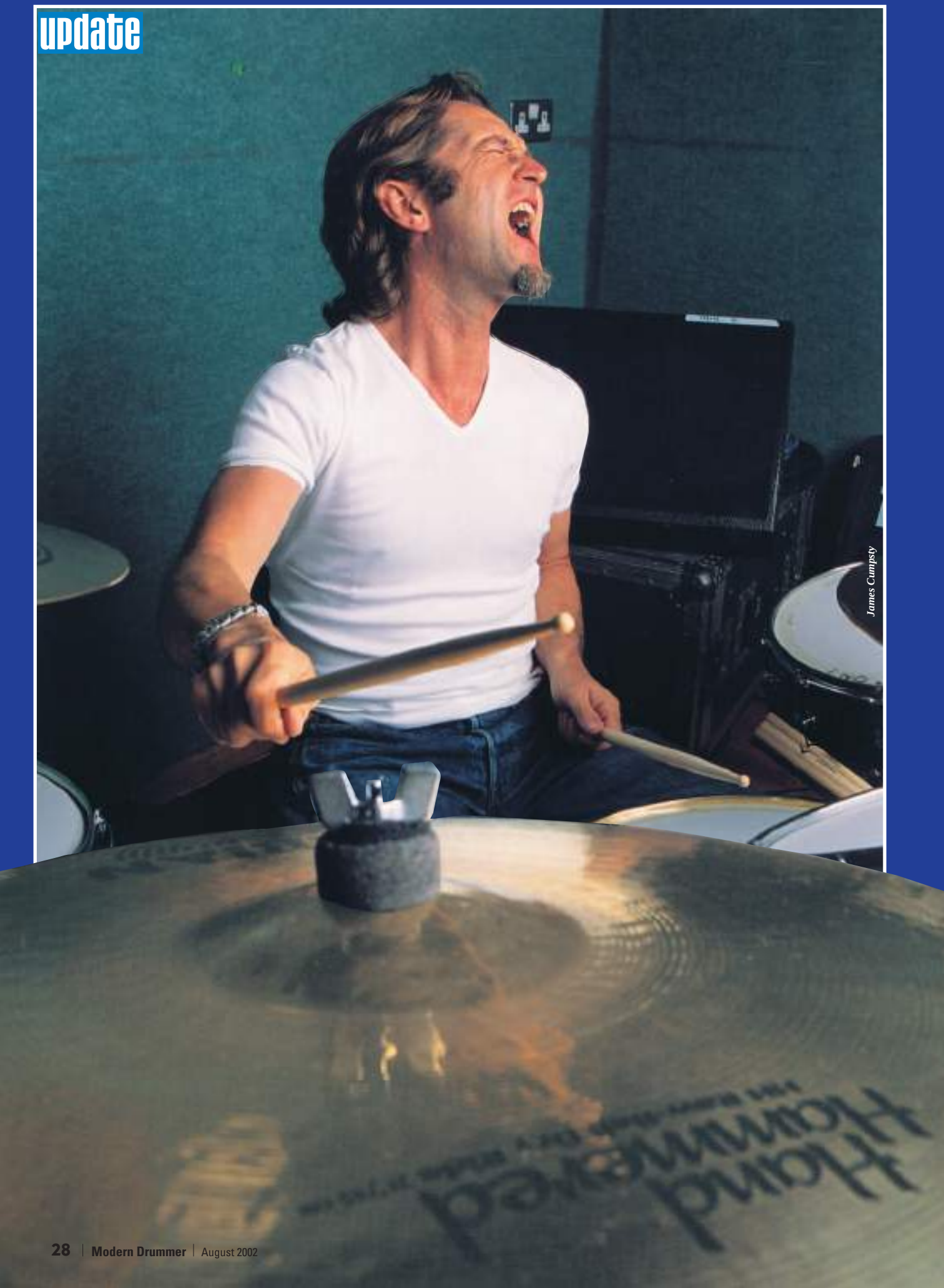


James Cumpsty

Geoff Dugmore

From Pub Bands To Studio First Call

As a youth from a small town near Glasgow, Geoff Dugmore sat between a rock and a hard place, namely the barren Scottish highlands to the north and the impenetrable English music scene to the south. Despite Geoff's consuming love of drums and a strong start in pub bands, the odds pointed to a job clerking in a record shop or firing bricks—certainly not to a thriving London session career backing Stevie Nicks, Heather Nova, The Thompson Twins, Tina Turner, Dusty Springfield, Dido, The Gypsy Kings, John Paul Jones, Gary Clark, and Danny Wilson. But Geoff Dugmore had discovered something: the missing link between the much maligned cover band and the recording drummer.

"When you're in pop bands," says Geoff, "you go through so many styles that inevitably they rub off on you. I don't understand the phobia about playing covers. If you're not taking other musical influences onboard, you're blinkering yourself!"

When Geoff arrives at a recording date, he makes it memorable, first for the truckload of gear he carts: DW drums, spare snares, scores of Sabian cymbals, Roland V-Drums, a cocktail kit, and a percussion trunk. Then he casts his spell. "I place candles around the drumkit and in the control room," Geoff explains. "For Natalie Imbruglia's new album, I brought Persian rugs so that everybody could hang out on the studio floor."

In a declining session scene, Dugmore stays busy. For example, Sunday he finished a string of Roland V-Drum clinics with Omar Hakim. Monday he was packing for a well-earned vacation when he heard the phone. "I got a call to do a session *that night* for a new Warner Bros. artist named Fahan," he recalls. Okay, just *one* more!

One engineer observed that Dugmore plays as if his life depends on it. Responds Geoff, "My passion for drums and playing music is so intense that, even if I'm doing something as bizarre as Killing Joke, I get completely into it. I put my entire *soul* into every track I play."

We may see Geoff touring with One Giant Leap. The project features talent as wildly diverse as Robbie Williams and Dennis Hopper.

T. Bruce Wittet

James Cumpsty

James Cumpsty

MARKY RAMONE

Hall Of Fame Drummer

"We could talk for days," Marky Ramone says about his career. "I mean, there's so many things." That's for sure. After playing with The Ramones for sixteen years, Marky continues to play with such artists as The SpeedKings, Misfits bassist Jerry Only, and former Black Flag guitarist/singer Dez Cadena.

As for a career highlight, just this past March The Ramones were inducted into the Rock And Roll Hall Of Fame. "I never expected it," he admits. "I was amazed. We were the first band of our genre to be in there."

Ramone's first exposure to drums came with The Beatles' appearance on *The Ed Sullivan Show* when he was eight years old. His influences grew to include The Dave Clark Five, Jimi Hendrix, and Cream. "But the drummer that stood out the most," Marky admits, "the one that had the image and an enduring effect on me, was Keith Moon. A great drummer—a little sloppy at times, but great."

Kit-wise, Ramone has remained true to Paiste cymbals and now plays a DW red sparkle set. His affection for Paiste started some time ago. "I saw John Bonham using them, and his cymbals sounded much better than everyone else's," Ramone explains. His setup includes 15" Signature Sound Edge hi-hats, an 18" Signature Full crash, a 20" Signature Power crash, and a 22" Signature Full ride.

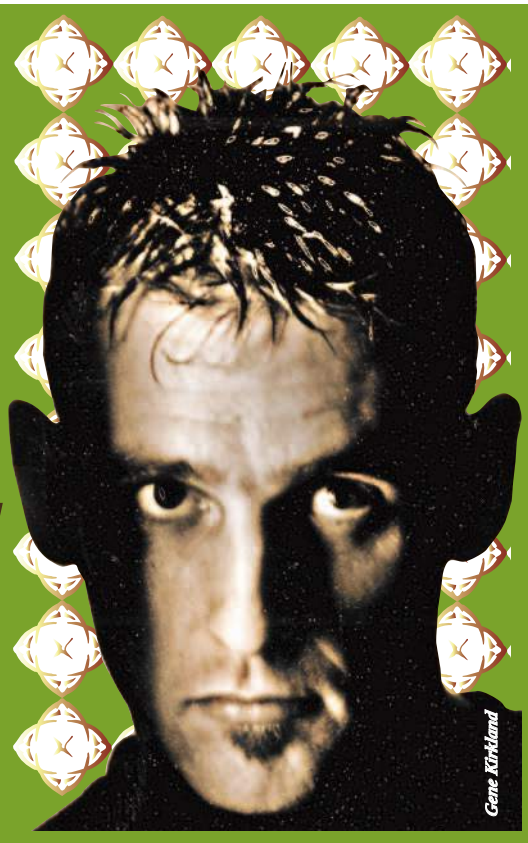
Marky learned a bevy of lessons while playing with The Ramones, which he continues to use today. He ticks off without thought: "Where to put a drum fill at the right time," he starts. "Never to overplay when you don't have to. And the most important thing: Be tight. If you waver in your playing, then you have a problem. I notice a lot of drummers waver when they play, and it ruins the groove."

Ramone keeps in shape by practicing around two and a half hours a day. "I have my drum pad and my military sticks," he reports. "I make sure that I build up a sweat. To me that's like doing a show. As long as you're sweating, not stopping, and can mentally get into it, it feels great. If you can do that on a drum pad, you can definitely do it on a drumset. It's like power steering without the power."

David John Farinella

The Apex Theory's

Sammy J. Watson



Topsy-Turvy Chops

"I'll die a student," admits Apex Theory drummer Sammy J. Watson. "I look at my favorite players—Vinnie Colaiuta and Dennis Chambers—and I know they're still learning. I can't imagine anyone getting to the place where they think there's nothing more they can learn. To me, the greater you get, the more you realize that the window gets bigger to go through."

Watson climbs through a few windows himself on AT's debut, *Topsy-Turvy,* while uncovering a frantic, rhythmic musical approach. "Some of the songs, people would argue, are way too busy," Watson says. "Some of it is, but that's the approach." As an example he points to the song "Shhh…(Hope Diggy)." "We wanted the verses in that song to be kind of that frantic aggro thing," he says. "That's the vibe. It's definitely what it is, take it or leave it."

The band's rhythm section of Watson and bassist Dave Hakopyan occasionally take an off-kilter drum 'n' bass approach, which was new for Watson and can be heard on the songs "That's All" and "Bravo." "When I first started in the band, Dave asked if I'd ever listened to drum 'n' bass or jungle," Watson says. "I listened to a little Aphex Twin and was like, 'This is kind of like James Brown sped up.' It was cool, so I came up with my own approach. There are some electronica bands out there that have drummers playing, but I sound nothing like them. I sort of morphed it."

Though Watson listened to some of today's electronica bands for inspiration, he was strongly influenced by drummer Gary Novak, who came to prominence playing with Chick Corea. "Gary would do a lot of up-tempo stuff, and he would be ghosting all over the place," Watson explains. "It was floating. That's where I got my first taste of seeing that you could do a lot of stuff, and in the right context, make it work."

David John Farinella

Scott Neumann

On The NYC Jazz Scene

Scott Neumann, born and bred in Oklahoma, combines formal and informal techniques of playing the drum-set—and to great effect. Neumann began performing as a child, graduated from North Texas with a degree in music education, and over a decade ago entered the sometimes harsh reality of the New York City scene.

Scott grew up listening to and playing country, rock, and jazz. He says, "Local musicians and the well-known bands that played the Tulsa area helped me develop a particularly open view of music." And Neumann's teachers—Kermit Tandey, Gary Sloan (in Oklahoma), Colin Bailey, Henry Okstel (at North Texas), and later, Peter Erskine—were caring and careful, and encouraged him to be stylistically flexible.

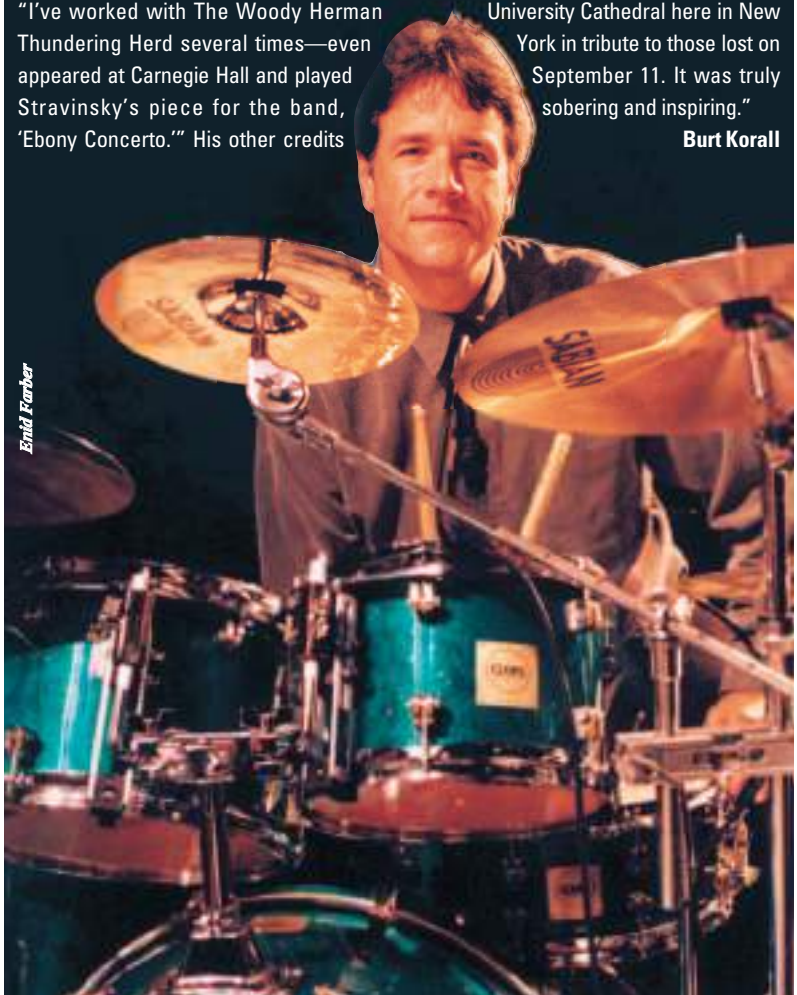
Scott's ability to deal so well with so many kinds of music has brought him diverse employment. "I came to New York specifically because there are so many opportunities to grow here," he asserts. "I've worked with The Woody Herman Thundering Herd several times—even appeared at Carnegie Hall and played Stravinsky's piece for the band, 'Ebony Concerto.'" His other credits include Joshua Redman, Brother Jack McDuff, The Jazz Mandolin Project, The Tony Trishka Group, Dave Liebman, and The BMI/New York Jazz Orchestra.

Scott was the primary source of pulsation and rhythmic intelligence in the recent Broadway musical *Swing*, which ran for fourteen months. Currently he's subbing in the revival of *42nd Street*, and is involved with other musical shows slated for Broadway.

What draws one to this drummer is his overall professionalism. With a jazz-oriented New York big band, he brings attractive, meaningful qualities to the arrangements and compositions, neither contributing too much nor too little to the music. It's interesting to note that Scott doesn't need an excess of drums and cymbals to make a positive impression. His work on the cast recording of *Swing* (Sony Classical) is recommended.

One of Neumann's most memorable recent experiences? "Playing a solo drum piece at the Columbia University Cathedral here in New York in tribute to those lost on September 11. It was truly sobering and inspiring."

Burt Korall



Enid Farber

The Magical Groove Of NRBQ's TOM ARDOLINO

Check the CD collections of Eric Clapton, Keith Richards, Bonnie Raitt, or Paul McCartney, and chances are you'll find copies of *Tiddlywinks, Grooves In Orbit*, and *Peek-A-Boo* by veteran popsters NRBQ. That kind of admiration would be understandable if the Q was itself a household name. But although they've shared stage and studio with all of the above, today NRBQ—formed in 1967 by pianist Terry Adams and bassist Joey Spampinato—remains one of the best-kept secrets in pop music.

But whether it's Tokyo or Toledo, NRBQ still performs like it's day one—enthusiastic, full of surprises, and capable of converting the uninitiated on the spot. Much of that energy stems from the grooving, rock-steady rhythms of Tom Ardolino, the curly-haired dynamo who took over for drummer Tom Staley back in 1974 without any prior job experience—musical or otherwise—and never left. Yet even after twenty-eight years, the New England-based Ardolino is as upbeat as ever about the band's prospects.

"We've got this upcoming VH1 live gig that features concerts by bands who've been around for thirty years or more—and they put us on first," says Ardolino. He's just back from a Vermont studio where the band (which also includes guitarist Johnny Spampinato, Joey's younger brother) is working up new tracks for a forthcoming album. "That oughta help get our name out into the mainstream."

Ardolino's never been big on gear talk, preferring instead to concentrate on the music (though he does admit to using Noble & Cooley drums and Zildjian cymbals). According to Ardolino, it's not always the name or how you've got them miked. It's how hard you can bash. "I used to crack my rims all the time by slamming on them with all my might," boasts Ardolino, who occasionally attacks his snare using a unique back-sticking method that's baffled pros for years. After twenty-five years of recording, there's one thing Ardolino's decided: Don't always trust the sound of the drums in the recording room.

"I swear, there have been so many sessions where I thought my kit sounded like crap," Ardolino says. "Then I walk into the control room afterwards, and it's *brilliant*. You just never know what can happen between the room and that recorder."

Julian Simons

NEWS

Terry Bozzio is no longer endorsing Sabian cymbals. No word yet as to what cymbals he'll be playing in the future.

Paul Thompson is on Brian Ferry's new album, *Frantic*.

Josh LaBelle, **Glenn Graham**, **Matt Chamberlain**, and **Mike Peterson** played on former Blind Melon and Unified Theory member Brad Smith's solo album, *Mercy*.

Dave Halpern is on Highway 9's debut Epic album, *What In Samhill?*

After much-needed time off to play the role of a new dad, Mana drummer **Alex Gonzalez** is back in the studio, working on a new album with the band. They will tour behind a late summer release.

Future Man is on Bela Fleck And The Flecktones' latest, *Live At The Quick*.

Jim Christie plays drums and percussion on John McEuen and Jimmy Ibbotson's new performance DVD, *Nitty Gritty Surround*.

Drummer/percussionist **Butch** is on the road with Rufus Wainwright.

Bud Harner produced GRP artist Jeff Golub's new CD, *Do It Again*, with **Steve Ferrone** on drums and **Luis Conte** on percussion.

Russ Lawton is on Trey Anastasio's new solo album; he's also on the road with the former Phish frontman.

Richie Morales is on Gato Barbieri's new CD along with percussionists **Marc Quiñones** and **Cyro Baptista**.

Congratulations to Kim and **Joe Bergamini** on the birth of their son, Nicholas Joseph.

Curt Bisquera has done recent recordings with The Backstreet Boys, as well as several films and jingles, and is currently on tour with Boz Scaggs. He can also be seen playing around LA with The Bisquera Bros.

DRUM DATES

This month's important events in drumming history

Keith Moon was born on August 23, 1947.

Ventures drummer **Mel Taylor** passed away on August 11, 1996.

On August 12, 1960, The Silver Beetles recruit **Pete Best**. Two years and four days later, on August 16, 1962, **Ringo Starr** replaces Pete Best as The Beatles' new drummer.

The week of August 11, 1973, **Ian Paice** and Deep Purple have two albums back to back on Billboard's Top-Ten with their live recording, *Made In Japan* at number 6 and *Machine Head* at number 7.

Jeff Porcaro replaces **Jim Hodder** in Steely Dan on August 3, 1974.

Chad Smith joins The Red Hot Chili Peppers and makes his debut on *Mother's Milk*, in August 1989.

Happy Birthday!

Ginger Baker (August 19, 1939)
Airto Moreira (August 5, 1941)
Danny Seraphine (August 28, 1948)
Sib Hashian (August 17, 1949)
Simon Kirke (August 27, 1949)
Dennis Elliott (August 18, 1950)
Tommy Aldridge (August 15, 1950)
Anton Fig (August 8, 1952)
Steve Smith (August 21, 1954)
Jon "Bermuda" Schwartz (August 18, 1956)
Gina Schock (August 31, 1957)
Rikki Rockett (August 8, 1959)
John Farriss (August 10, 1961)
Steve Gorman (August 17, 1965)
Dan "Wo–Jo" Wojciechowski (August 7, 1965)

New Metal For The Pedal

DW 9000 Series Titanium Limited Edition Pedals

DW's 9000 Series Floating Drive pedals feature technological improvements that the company feels give them the potential to change the way drummers play. To begin with, titanium is used to lower the weight of the footboard and improve the pedal's balance and strength. Other parts are machined from high-grade aluminum to achieve tight tolerances and to reduce mass.

The eccentric-drive rotor is independently mounted to the hex shaft through the use of friction-reducing ball bearings. The spring has been moved from the end of the hex shaft to the center of the pedal to eliminate the indirect transfer and loss of energy. In addition to Delta ball bearings at the hex shaft and hinge, the 9000 utilizes ball bearings in the rotor, rocker, and spring connector.

Only five hundred single and five hundred double 9000 Series pedals will be produced. Each will include a sequential serial number and a certificate of authenticity signed by Don Lombardi and John Good. Single pedals are priced at $449, double pedals list for $899. (805) 485-6999 www.dwdrums.com.

Just A Little Slice Of...

Heavenly Drums

Heavenly Drums is a custom drum company located in Puerto Rico. Owner/drum builder Luis Lorenzo states that from there, he can serve the needs of drummers "not only on our island, but also in the Caribbean, Latin America, and the rest of the world."

The company offers kits, but specializes in custom snare drums. Maple shells from six to thirty plies thick, segmented or steam-bent solid shells in exotic woods, and black anodized or brass-plated steel shells are all available.

Hardware options include triple-flanged, die-cast, vintage single-flanged, and wood hoops, along with a variety of lug styles, snare throw-offs, and snare-wire sets. Hand-polished wax, satin oil, clear lacquer, and polyurethane finishes are available, along with a large selection of wood coverings. (787) 769-9789, www.heavenlydrums.com.

Big Kits, Small Bite

Yamaha YD And Stage Custom Expanded Kits And Add-Ons

The times they are a'changin', and larger kits are once again becoming popular. Drummers seeking to break into these bigger setups without breaking the bank may appreciate the new YD and Stage Custom configurations from Yamaha.

Entry-level YD Kits are now available in seven- and nine-piece double-bass drum designs, at $1,899 and $2,099, respectively. The seven-piece features two 22" bass drums, 12" and 13" rack toms, and 14" and 16" floor toms. The nine-piece set adds 8" and 10" rack toms. Both sets include YDZ cymbals from Zildjian, including 14" hi-hats, a 16" crash, and a 20" ride.

Stage Custom Standard and Stage Custom Advantage kits are now available in seven-piece single-bass ($1,949/$2,159), seven-piece double-bass ($2,099/$2,259) and nine-piece double-bass ($2,399/$2,649) setups. Stage Custom models share identical drum sizes with the YD, with the exception of 16" and 18" floor toms on both kits, and 10", 12", 13", and 14" rack toms on the Advantage kits only.

Drummers who already own YD or Stage Custom kits can expand with new add-on toms (offered in all current finishes). The new 8" and 10" YD tom set, with a WS-760 double tom stand, lists for $399. Add-ons in 8"/10" rack and 8" rack/16" floor configurations—with a WS-765 double tom stand—are available for the Stage Custom Standard and Stage Custom Advantage kits, with respective list prices of $499/$599 and $579/$659. (714) 522-9011, www.yamahadrums.com.

A nine-piece YD kit and Stage Custom add-on drums

Who Says "Clear" Means "Plastic"?

Orlich Percussion Systems Glass Drums

John Orlich is a drummer and a glass sculptor. Put the two together (crazy as it sounds at first), and you have Orlich Percussion Systems glass drums.

Owing to its density and hardness, glass absorbs virtually no sound waves. According to Orlich, this property allows those waves "to resound within a drumshell to maximum efficiency and duration." The special metal frame used around the glass shell regulates overtones. In the case of snare drums, this design is said to result in a characteristic crack and full-bodied sound. Alan White (Yes) used an Orlich kit to record three tracks of the band's 1999 release, *The Ladder*.

The snare drum shell is made up of twenty-seven $1\frac{1}{2}$"-wide plates of $\frac{3}{16}$"-thick beveled glass, within a superstructure of lacquer-coated, brush-finished brass. The drum possesses a radically deep snare bed, allowing the snares to curve uniformly against the bottom head. Die-cast hoops are standard. A 7x14 drum is priced at $875. Engraving, tinted glass, and other options are available at extra cost. Prices for complete drumkits vary with size and design features.

According to Orlich, extensive torture testing has proven the roadworthiness and durability of the drums. In most cases, rims and lugs sustained damage before the glass shells did. The company feels that if the drums are carried in cases and treated with the same care that should be extended to any quality instrument, they will provide years of service. (252) 441-9233, www.orlichpercussion.com.

High Technology From Japan

Kitano Titanium Custom Drumkit

Kitano is a Japanese manufacturer that has long specialized in titanium products. In 1989 they created what they claim was the world's first titanium drumkit. Early kits were distributed under other brand names, but in 1995 the company started selling in Japan under their own brand. Kitano debuted titanium drums on the international music scene in 2001.

Kitano's custom kits feature shells, hoops, and lugs made of titanium. They're fitted with an exclusive tom-mount and floor tom leg mounting system, which attaches the mounts to an outer hoop rather than to the shell in order to maximize drum resonance.

Kitano claims that titanium drums offer extra tone and volume, allowing drummers to achieve maximum power with less effort—thus prolonging their careers. Orders and inquiries should be sent directly to Kitano, in Osaka, Japan.

titandrum@mb.infoweb.ne.jp, www.kitanodrums.com.

Kenny's Got A Lot Of Brass

Tama Limited Edition 6½x14 Kenny Aronoff Signature Snare Drum

Kenny Aronoff was so pleased with his original 5x14 and 4x15 Tama Trackmaster signature snare drums that he asked Tama to experiment with a 6½x14. According to Kenny, "My goal was to create drums that were as good as the most desired vintage drums in the industry. And these drums are that good."

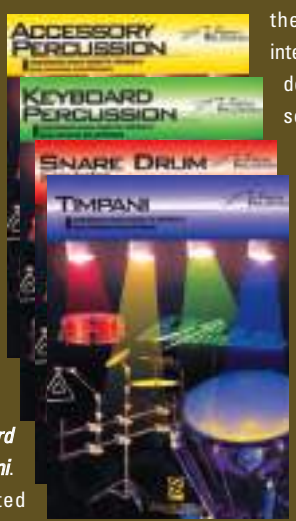
The drum's 1-mm black nickel-finished brass shell is hand-engraved by master drum craftsman John Aldridge, as are the lugs, hoops, and throw-off. Each drum comes with its own badge that will be personalized with the owner's name. This will be an extremely limited edition: Only thirty drums will be made.

(215) 638-8670, www.tama.com.

The Reference Shelf

Berklee Press's new ***Instant Drum Set*** by Ron Savage ($14.95) lets beginners start playing from the very first lesson. An accompanying CD features play-along tracks in a variety of styles, including rock, blues, country, and funk. Lessons are based on ear-training with the intent of playing from day one, rather than getting stuck in detailed theory. Berklee Press publications are distributed by Hal Leonard. (617) 747-2666, www.berkleepress.com.

Meredith Music has released ***Primary Handbook For Mallets: A Beginning Method (With Play-Along CD)*** by drummer/author/educator Garwood Whaley ($14.95). This method, for xylophone, marimba, vibes, and bells, is designed for the beginner at any age. The method provides a complete introduction to mallet playing for private lesson or classroom use. The play-along CD makes self-instruction easier. Meredith Music Publications are distributed by Hal Leonard. (301) 261-5015, www.meredithmusic.com.



The Firth/Feldstein Percussion Series from PlayinTime productions offers four new method books co-created by renowned percussionist/educators Vic Firth and Sandy Feldstein. Titles include ***Accessory Percussion***, ***Snare Drum (Including Bass Drum)***, ***Keyboard Percussion***, and ***Timpani***. Each book is created with a flexible concept for use in virtually any teaching situation, and includes warm-up exercises, etudes, solos, and performance pieces. The books may be combined for ensemble instruction and performance. Each title is priced at $7.95. The series is distributed by Carl Fischer.

Also new from Carl Fischer is John Beck's ***Concepts For Timpani*** ($24.95). The book reflects a natural approach to the instrument, and is intended to help the student produce a quality sound that will blend with music, while remaining relaxed regardless of the technical difficulty. Topics include tuning, warm-ups, tone production, rolls, muffling, cross-sticking, pedaling, and interval exercises. Twelve performance solos are included. (800) 762-2328, www.carlfischer.com.

And What's More

TAMA's affordable Rockstar Custom line is now available in a Mahogany Fade finish. Originally offered only in the top-of-the-line Starclassic Maple series, fade finishes were introduced last year to the intermediate-price Starclassic Performer birch line (with Dark Cherry Fade). Its popularity led Tama to add a fade finish to the affordable Rockstar Custom series. The drums feature 9-mm shells with one inner ply of basswood and seven plies of Philippine mahogany. **(215) 638-8670, www.tama.com.**

The compact new TRE23db chime set from **TREEWORKS** is a scaled-down version of their full-size TRE35db. A space between the two rows of bars allows the front row to be played independently. The 45 aluminum/titanium alloy bars are polished and tempered for vibrant tone. Each bar is hand-tied to the black walnut mantle with braided CordLoc for strength. Handcrafted in Nashville, the TRE23db is priced at $180. **(877) 372-1601, www.treeworkschimes.com.**

Neil Peart Drummer's Choice snare drum

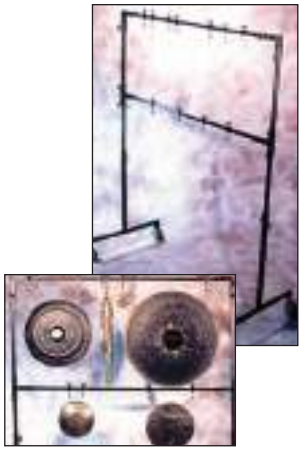
Drummer's Choice Snare Drums from **DRUM WORKSHOP** are Edge, Craviotto, and Collector's Series snare drums with the same type, size, and finish as those used by sixteen of DW's top drum artists. The drums cover a wide spectrum of sounds and styles. Prices range from $525 for Matt Chamberlain's 5x14 Collector's Copper drum to $1,535 for Richie Hayward's 5x14 Exotic Edge.

DW has also expanded its affordably priced Workshop accessory snare drum range to include 6x10 and 6x12 Wild models. The 10-ply, all-maple drums come without reinforcement hoops and are now available in Silver, Red, or Green Sparkle, Blue Transparent and Gold Illusion FinishPly, and Intense Purple, Loud Lime, Bubble Gum Pink, Neon Blue, and Obnoxious Orange Lacquer. The 6x10 is priced at $369/$449 (FinishPly/lacquer), the 6x12 goes for $382/$465. Natural Lacquer Workshop snare drums remain available at $399. **(805) 485-6999, www.dwdrums.com.**

Wild snare drums

SLUG PERCUSSION PRODUCTS now offers the Muffelt MFT-222, a felt dampening strip designed specifically for floor toms. Made of 100% natural wool felt, the 2" wide by 22" long by $\frac{1}{16}$" thick strip reduces unwanted overtones and ring. The makers claim that natural wool absorbs vibration better than other materials, resists stretching, and will last for years. The Muffelt MFT-222 is recommended for all drums 14"-18" in diameter. Suggested retail price is $9.95. **(312) 432-0553, www.slugdrums.com.**

PROTECTION RACKET, a British company known throughout Europe for their instrument bags, has entered the US market. Their M.I.T.S. (Musical Instrument Transport Systems) line includes fleece-lined drum and percussion bags, along with a hardware case with wheels. The line is handled in the US by **BIG BANG DISTRIBUTION**. **(800) 547-6401, www.bigbangdist.com.**



After twenty-five years of renting and repairing percussion instruments in New York City, **AYERS PERCUSSION** has developed products for its own needs that are now available to the public. These include a wide variety of concert- and mallet-percussion stands, caster and leg assemblies, and sound effects. **(212) 582-8410, www.ayerspercussion.com.**

Frankfurt Musik Messe Report

Text and photos by Heinz Kronberger

The Musik Messe, held annually in Frankfurt, Germany, is the world's largest musical-instrument trade show. This past March 13–17, more than 1,450 companies from over forty countries came to display their new items. Nearly 80,000 visitors attended the show during its five-day run.

Many of the products shown at this year's Messe were featured in *MD*'s June "New Product Extravaganza." This report covers items introduced since then, along with products not normally seen in US markets. So check it out. Who knows? You might just find your dream drum, made by a craftsman in Europe, South America, or Asia.

Anatolian Cymbals

DDT Trigger Systems

Färbner Drum Design

Hanus & Hert

Ischer Custom Drums

Masterwork Cymbals

Anatolian Cymbals has become a popular brand in Europe. They displayed their Baris, Ultimate, and Natural series, as well as signature cymbals for German drummers like Bertram Engel and Ralf Gustke. (011) 49 2225 999690, www.boxoftrix.de.

Bauer Percussion presented a new conga line (made out of Maruba wood) under the Vintage logo. (011) 49 2131 858999, altmann@sambapercussion.de, www.sambapercussion.de.

DDT Trigger Systems offers acoustic triggers, ddt drumheads, pad sets, and trigger pedals for bass drums and hi-hats. (011) 49 7324 969990, www.ddttriggernet.de.

Drum Sound drums are made in Italy but distributed by Drums Only/Germany. Their drums combine their own hardware with Keller shells and feature lots of gorgeous finishes. (011) 49 261 83011, www.drumsound.it.

Austria's **Färbner Drum Design** fits Keller shells with their own hardware to create drumkits in a variety of combinations and drum sizes. (011) 43 5572 24432, www.drumdesign.com.

Handschuh Solid Drums offers custom solid-shell drums in sizes from 8" to 26" and in all kinds of finishes. The drums feature special wood hoops, including brackets and wood claws. (011) 49 2874 45299, www.handschuh-solid-drums.de.

From the Czech Republic come **Hanus & Hert** drums. Their wood block snare drums with wood hoops are made out of seven different woods and come in sizes from 12" to 14". (011) 420 2 33352707, hanushertdrums@volny.cz, wwwhanushert.com.

Headliner Percussion (a division of Meinl) celebrated their tenth anniversary with a special percussion setup just for this occasion. (305) 418-4520, gomeinl@aol.com, www.meinl.de.

Ischer Custom Drums from Switzerland presented their line of acrylic drums for the first time. (011) 41 62 8242106, hans.ischer@swissonline.ch.

KTE Carbonsticks are made in a variety of different sizes and weights. Special orders are also possible. (011) 49 05924 788114, geert.meyer@kte-group.de.

Kumu Drums feature thin shells of Finnish birch and their own steel hardware. Drums are available in sizes from 6" to 28", with steel or wood hoops. (011) 358 3 6127424, kumu@kumu.fi, www.kumu.fi.

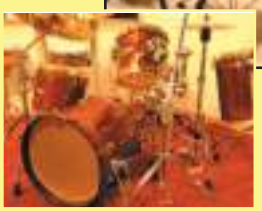
This five-ply maple set from Italy's **LE Soprano** features a Tobacco Sunburst finish and a new lug design. (011) 39 35 332079, soprano@lesoprano.it, www.lesoprano.it.

Masterwork Cymbals is a new brand offering lots of different models and sounds, all made by hand in a factory in Istanbul, Turkey. (011) 90 212 485 9410, www.masterworkcymbals.com.

Bauer Percussion

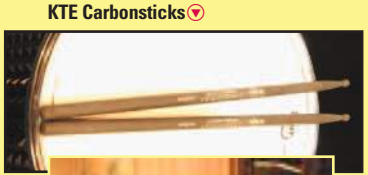
Drum Sound

Headliner Percussion



Handschuh Solid Drums

KTE Carbonsticks



Kumu Drums

LE Soprano

NP Snare Drums

Paiste

Orion Cymbals

Shawstix

NP Snare Drums presented a complete line of marching instruments as well as a few very interesting-sounding maple snare drums, all made in Spain. (011) 96 154 3169, nova.percusio@ciberia.es, www.novapercusio.com.

Brazil's **Orion Cymbals** are made out of B12 alloy, which falls in between the B8 and B20 alloys used for most cymbals. (011) 0800 770 1498, wwworioncymbals.com.br.

Paiste presented their new Noise Works cymbals: stack combinations and hi-hats with special applications. (714) 529-2222, www.paiste.com.

Denmark's **PJ Percussion** line of percussion instruments includes Uno series congas and bongos. (011) 45 38105710, www.pjperc.dk.

Pulse Percussion instruments are made in China but distributed by Belgium's EMD. (011) 32 27450970, www.emdmusic.be.

England's **Shawstix** showed their complete line of hickory and maple sticks, as well as artist models for drummers like Nicko McBrain and Jon Hiseman. (011) 44 1274 873157, www.shawstix.co.uk.

Sonor introduced new percussion instruments in three lines called Latino, Global, and Percussao Samba Percussion. Also new in the Giant Step series are a double pedal that puts the beater in the middle, a Triple Pedal, and a Twin Hi-Hat. (804) 515-1900, www.sonor.de.

Stagg Cymbals (made in China, distributed by Belgium's EMD) offer specially hammered models. (011) 32 27450970, www.emdmusic.be.

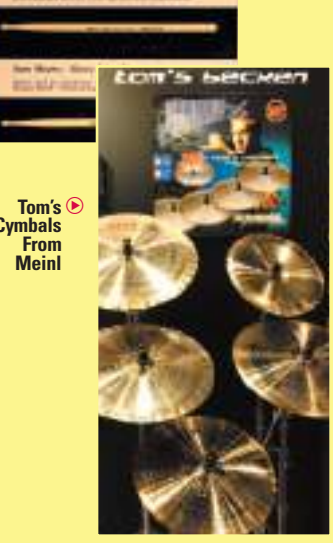
Meinl Cymbals introduced a new series designed with Thomas Lang from Austria. Called simply Tom's Cymbals, they feature special crashes made out of FX 9 material. (305) 418-4520, gomeinl@aol.com.

UFIP presented their first entry-level cymbals: The M12 Series (bronze) and M8 Series (brass). (011) 49 511 67998 440, www.ufip.com.

Unicat (from Germany) is a new flexible tripod system for percussion instruments like djembes, congas, and udus. (011) 49 69 43058200, www.globaldrummer.com.

Wahan Drum Technology is a new German brand offering drumsets as well as snare drums with a special throw-off system. (011) 49 6134 286522, www.wahan.de.

Yamaha's new Andre Ceccarelli snare drum features a 4-ply, 5½x14 maple shell with reinforcement hoops, zinc die-cast rims, one-piece lugs, an internal muffler, and a new H-type strainer. (714) 522-9011, www.yamaha.com.



Tom's Cymbals From Meinl

PJ Percussion

Stagg Cymbals

Sonor

Pulse Percussion

Wahan Drum Technology

Unicat

UFIP

Yamaha Andre Ceccarelli Snare

The Most Expensive? Maybe...

But Far From Overpriced.

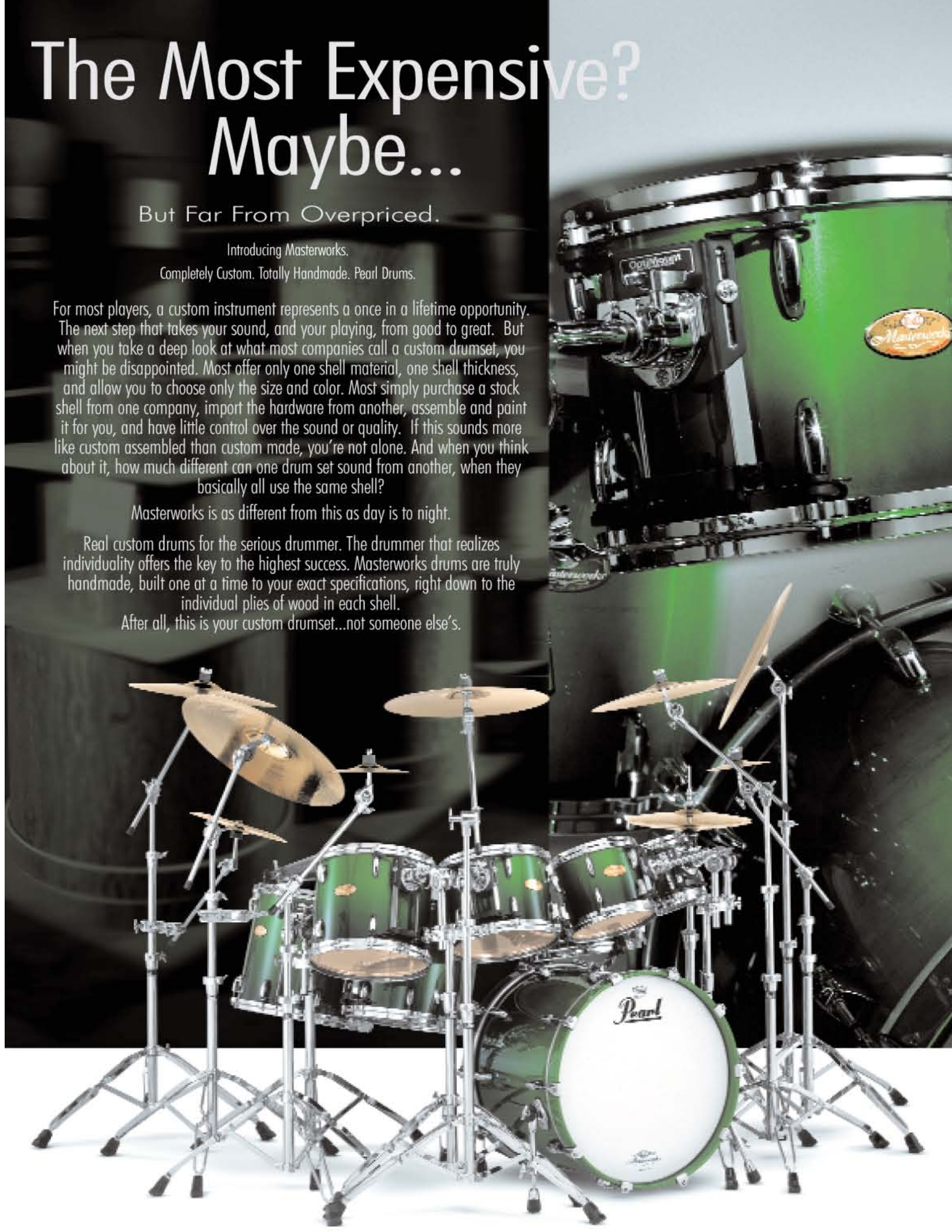
Introducing Masterworks.

Completely Custom. Totally Handmade. Pearl Drums.

For most players, a custom instrument represents a once in a lifetime opportunity. The next step that takes your sound, and your playing, from good to great. But when you take a deep look at what most companies call a custom drumset, you might be disappointed. Most offer only one shell material, one shell thickness, and allow you to choose only the size and color. Most simply purchase a stock shell from one company, import the hardware from another, assemble and paint it for you, and have little control over the sound or quality. If this sounds more like custom assembled than custom made, you're not alone. And when you think about it, how much different can one drum set sound from another, when they basically all use the same shell?

Masterworks is as different from this as day is to night.

Real custom drums for the serious drummer. The drummer that realizes individuality offers the key to the highest success. Masterworks drums are truly handmade, built one at a time to your exact specifications, right down to the individual plies of wood in each shell.
After all, this is your custom drumset...not someone else's.



With no assembly line boundaries and no mass production compromises, Masterworks drums truly represent all that is possible. Each drum is a work of art, constructed by seamlessly blending the artisan qualities and experienced wisdom of hand craftsmanship, with the cutting edge technology and precision of state-of-the-art custom built machinery.

There is no inventory.
Nothing is stock.
The words inventory and custom do not even belong in the same sentence.

Every drum in your kit is designed by you, and hand built to your exacting specifications, one drum at a time. We've assembled an elite group of Pearl master craftsmen in order to manufacture the finest drums the world has ever known. Great attention is given to even the smallest of custom details. From our wood specialists, that visually inspect and choose each individual wood ply at the mill to insure the absolute ultimate of quality standards is precisely meet, to the custom paint artisans that apply an exclusive, labor intensive, thirty-one step custom finish, in a truly endless array of custom colors and styles, Masterworks drums are as individual as you are, and like no other you have heard or seen before.

Free Pearl Video

Find Out More About Pearl.

Get your free copy of Pearl's all new hour long video "The Company, The Drums, and the Artists That Play Them". It features great interviews, awesome live footage, and indepth product insight from some of the world's greatest drummers including Dennis Chambers, Chad Smith, Tico Torres, Virgil Donati, and Vinnie Paul, to name just a few. The new Pearl video is available at no cost from your local authorized Pearl dealer, or for a small shipping/handling cost, you can have one sent directly to you.
See www.pearldrum.com for more details.

About The Kit Above

The Masterworks kit featured above and to the left features thin 4 ply/5mm shells comprised of 2 inner plies of African Mahogany and 2 outer plies of North American Maple, with a stunning Green Fade Pearl finish. Sizes chosen are 22"x18" Bass Drum, 8"x7", 10"x8", 10"x9", 13"x11", 14"x13", 16"x14" Toms, and a matching 13"x4" Snare Drum.

Pearl

www.pearldrum.com

Masterworks is About Choice...Yours.

The choices available with a Pearl Masterworks kit seem endless and it all starts with the shell. Few factors influence the sound of your drums more than the quality and choice of wood used to construct the shell. With Masterworks, the shell is custom made to your specs, not pulled from a shelf.

North American Maple, hand selected Prime Birch, or true African Mahogany.

Choose from three highly prized woods for shell construction, not just the same stock shell everyone else custom paints. You can specify your kit to be all of one wood, or choose composite shells of two or more woods to add warmth, punch, presence, or crispness as the drums get larger or smaller. A common Masterworks choice is to add two inner plies of African Mahogany to Maple Bass Drums and Floor Toms for an awesome increase in richness and body in lower frequencies, while still maintaining the smooth, cutting tone inherent to Maple. Each drum in your kit can be completely different, or make them all the same. The choice is yours.

Custom Made Shells to Your Specifications.

Four Shell Thickness Options.

Next, custom tailor the projection, power, and near field voice of your kit by specifying the thickness of the shells. Choose between 4 ply/5mm, 6 ply/7.5mm, 8 ply/10mm or 10 ply/12.5mm shell thickness options to get the resonance and power that's perfect for your style of play.

Four Shell Thickness Options

Patented HC/sms Shell Construction

Masterworks drum shells are the most precisely crafted, exacting air chambers available within the drum industry today. Pearl's exclusive Heat Compression Shell Molding System represents state-of-the-art for shell quality, sound, longevity, and above all...consistency. With over fifty years of experience producing millions of shells, nothing else even comes close. While others choose to buy completed shells manufactured by others for their drums, with no control over quality, at Pearl, we understand the shell is the heart, soul, and nucleus of the drums' overall sound. By stringently controlling every aspect of the shell manufacturing process, every Masterworks shell of the same size, constructed of the same material, in the same thickness, will sound the same when tapping the raw shell. This simple test easily tells you, if you hear any variation in pitch from one shell to the next, you simply do not have manufacturing consistency.

Masterworks drum shells begin with hand selected, fully aged wood plies, cut to size with tapered scarf joints at each end. Scarf joints allow the seams to completely overlap, totally eliminating gaps and dead spots left by butt seam methods, common with other shell forming processes. Each ply is coated with a patented adhesive formulation, specifically engineered by Pearl to dry to the same density as the wood it binds, and then hand formed into hydraulic compression dies, custom built for each size drum. The plies are then compressed with force equaling to 154 lbs of pressure per square centimeter, while being heated past the boiling point until cured to insure the adhesive enters every pore of the wood. No other system uses this perfect combination of extreme heat and pressure to insure a perfect drum shell... A Masterworks drum shell.

Heat Compression Shell Molding System

Staggered Scarf Joint Seams

Find Out More About Masterworks.

Get the 40 page Masterworks catalog that takes you step by step through the process of designing and building a one-of-a-kind Masterworks kit that will make your dreams come true. Masterworks catalogs are available at no cost from your local authorized Pearl Masterworks dealer, by download from our web site, or for a small shipping/handling cost, you can have one sent directly to you. See www.pearldrum.com/masterworks.html for more details.

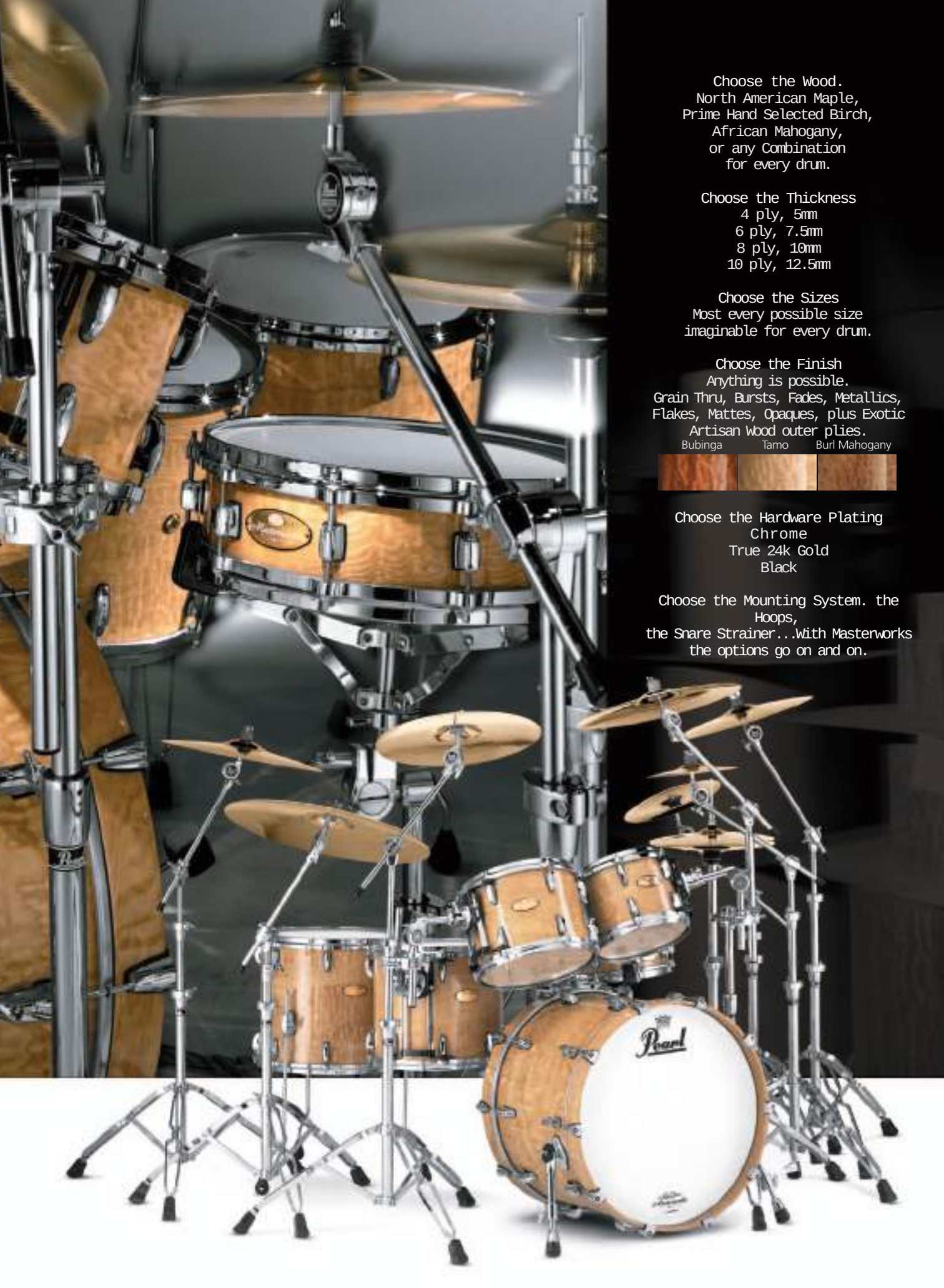
Pearl

www.pearldrum.com

40 page Masterworks Catalog.

About The Kit Above

The Masterworks kit featured above and to the right features thin 4 ply/5mm shells comprised of 2 inner plies of Maple and 2 plies of Natural Tamo, a Masterworks Artisan exterior finish. Sizes chosen are 22"x16" Bass Drum, 10"x8", 12"x9", 14"x12" Toms, 16"x14" Floor Tom, and a matching 14"x4" Snare Drum.



Choose the Wood.
North American Maple,
Prime Hand Selected Birch,
African Mahogany,
or any Combination
for every drum.

Choose the Thickness
4 ply, 5mm
6 ply, 7.5mm
8 ply, 10mm
10 ply, 12.5mm

Choose the Sizes
Most every possible size
imaginable for every drum.

Choose the Finish
Anything is possible.
Grain Thru, Bursts, Fades, Metallics,
Flakes, Mattes, Opaques, plus Exotic
Artisan Wood outer plies.

Bubinga Tamo Burl Mahogany

Choose the Hardware Plating
Chrome
True 24k Gold
Black

Choose the Mounting System. the Hoops,
the Snare Strainer...With Masterworks
the options go on and on.

Yamaha Oak Custom Drums

An Ancient Wood Offers A New Sound

HITS

clear and lively sound excellent for live applications

stunning visual appeal

outstanding construction quality

MISSES

questionable auxiliary snare mechanism

bass drum hoop doesn't easily accommodate other manufacturers' pedals

by Mark Parsons

At the Winter NAMM new-product convention in Anaheim, my editor suggested I check out the Yamaha display, hinting at something that might get my attention. He was right. Yamaha was debuting a new line, and these striking drums definitely caught my eye. Along with maple, birch, and beech, Yamaha has added yet another wood to its high-end range. The Oak Customs are fully the equal of their siblings, built to the same quality level at the same factory in Japan, with similar (often identical) hardware and fittings. Yet their cost is substantially less. This is possible because, although it might be considered somewhat exotic for drumsets, oak is popular for other applications and is in good supply worldwide.

Our review kit was a five-piece shell pack (full kits with hardware are also available) that featured a few unusual sizes, including a 14x15 floor tom. Oak Custom floor toms are also available in 18", 16", 14", and 13" (!) sizes. (Imagine a bop kit with an 18" bass drum, 10" mounted tom, and 13" floor tom. *Cool.*) The kit was supplied with a TH-945 double tom holder.

An additional 7x14 snare was also sent along for review. And speaking of snares, Oak Custom snare drums are fitted with an interesting device: an extra set of wires under the batter head (similar to those found on some cocktail drums). More on this later.

Construction, Fit, And Finish

All Oak Custom shells are made from (you guessed it) 100% oak, using Yamaha's Air-Seal system. All bearing edges are cut at 45°, with a slightly rounded countercut. Upon examination, all the edges on our review kit proved to be smooth and free of any defects.

The lugs feature a small, rounded, one-bolt design that looks good on the shells and doesn't detract from the beautiful wood. They're very functional, too—low mass with minimal shell contact, and yet secure. (There's a built-in extrusion in the lug that mates with a corresponding hole in the shell.)

The toms and snares are fitted with 2.3-mm triple-flanged steel hoops. The bass drum had oak hoops finished to match the drum. Those hoops looked great, but their thickness made it difficult to clamp a non-Yamaha pedal onto them.

The included tom holder was a double ball-and-socket design that held the toms very securely yet allowed me to position them pretty much wherever I wanted. There's no "fore and aft" adjustment in the mount, but rotating it 180° does provide the option of moving the business end of the mount an additional two or three inches toward the drummer. A feature I really liked was the inclusion of a cymbal boom holder built into the mount. (Anything to save hauling around another cymbal stand!)

The rack toms were mounted via Yamaha's YESS suspension system. I like the YESS mounts. They're simple, they work well, they don't cause any problems during batter head changes, and they don't detract from the wood shells. Do YESS mounts isolate the sound as well as other "suspension"-style mounts do? I haven't done a controlled A/B test, so I honestly don't know. But I've heard several Yamaha kits that use them—including the Oak Customs—and none of them suffered from a lack of sustain.

Oak Custom kits are available in three glossy and four matte "transparent" lacquer finishes. Our review kit wore the York Honey Amber Oak glossy finish. I found it visually appealing, as did others who viewed the kit during the review period. The quality of the finish was high, the amber tint was very attractive, and the grain of the oak shells was more prominent than that of typical maple or birch shells.

In Use

Naturally, the big question is, Just what does oak sound like? Well, the sound of *any* particular drum is dependent on many factors beyond what species of wood is used for construction. But some generalities can be made.

All other factors being equal, as shell material gets harder and denser (and thicker, for that matter), the frequency of the fundamental tone goes up—as does the projection, to a point. So if maple is "warm and round" and birch is "clear and focused," then oak is "big and punchy."

The Oak Customs had lots of attack. There was plenty of sustain, too, but it was more through the midrange than lower down. (Of course this could be varied somewhat with tuning

and head selection.) The set was generally very lively, with lots of presence. Let's take it one piece at a time.

Kick: The mood here is big, full, and ringy (in a good sense). My first thought on hearing it was that Yamaha made a great choice in shipping the bass drum with Remo PowerStroke 3 heads. This drum seemed to like the unported front head just a tad tighter than most, for a big, live sound that projected well. Having the toms mounted on the bass drum is theoretically supposed to cut the sustain of the kick, but I didn't hear any evidence of that.

Toms: All three toms exhibited very good tone and projection. The slight amount of warmth they give away to a similarly constructed maple drum is more than made up for by their midrange clarity. All Oak Custom toms ship with clear Ambassadors installed top and bottom. Curious as to how it would affect the tone of the oak shells, I swapped the batter heads on the rack toms to double-ply heads. Yes, they sounded warmer and fatter, but to be honest I preferred these drums with the single-ply heads. It just seemed more true to their open and lively nature.

The 14x15 size turned out to be a good choice for a floor tom. It had most of the depth of a 16" drum but with the articulation of a 14" drum (and again, lots of projection).

Like the kick drum, the oak toms seemed at their best when tuned just a bit higher than you'd typically tune a maple drum for the same application. This is actually a good thing for live situations, because those deep, warm toms—that sound so good to the drummer—usually turn to mud by the time the sound gets out to the house. But these toms, tuned up to where they really start to sing, would *rock* in a club setting.

Snares: The 5½x14 snare was crisp and cutting, with very good sensitivity and great projection. However, there was also a nice, throaty depth to the tone. I attributed this to the fact that even though the shell was hard oak, it was 6-ply and—like the other Oak Custom drums—had no reinforcing rings. The useful tuning range was fairly broad, from low-mid to quite crisp, but the drum seemed to speak best in a medium-high tuning. At that point it really cut, yet it still had a nice, woody character.

The 7x14 snare had a similar personality, only with a deeper fundamental. For a deep snare it had a remarkably wide useful range. It sounded very good way down in fatback land, but I could also crank it up without choking the life out of it. It really ripped under high tension.

Something Extra

Now let's talk about the secondary set of snare wires the Oak Custom snare drums come fitted with. They're little "fans" of coiled snare wires that are brought into contact with the underside of the batter head by tightening a knob on the side of the shell. (It's similar to the way "internal mufflers" used to work.) The sound is, um...*interesting*—very dark and loose, like a gut snare with most of the strings broken. This effect worked best on the 7" snare when it was tuned low for a deep, dark, sloshy sound. Another dimension was achieved by using both snares at once. The resulting sound was slightly thicker yet tighter than just the normal snare alone, because the aux wires not only added some rattle but also dampened the top head a bit.

These sorts of subtle variations can be very cool in a recording situation. (I can see someone like Jim Keltner getting behind it.) But I question how useful they'd be in a typical live situation. Also, while the extra snares might be great for brush work or other sensitive, low-volume applications, I can foresee the unit getting pretty badly mauled under heavy impact, which could lead to its being damaged and/or hard to adjust properly.

You could always elect not to use the extra snares. The downside to that is the extra hardware the mechanism represents, both inside and on the shell. Of course, you could remove it, but then you're left with holes in the shell. Personally I like having the auxiliary snares to use or not use at my discretion, but not everyone will. I'd suggest to Yamaha that they make the snares available as an option rather than as standard equipment.

Conclusion

Lately we've been seeing lots of drumkits being marketed with the word "studio" somewhere in their name. These are generally very nice kits that have thin, responsive shells of maple or birch, suspension mounts, low-mass fittings, precision edges, and lacquer finishes. This is all well and good, but there's an unspoken message here: The pro-level kits are for

the *studio*. For the stage you can get away with using something less.

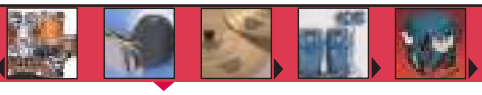
I don't see why this should be true. In the studio you can do certain things to cover up sonic deficiencies, and of course the audience doesn't see the kit. On stage there isn't anything between your drums and your listeners—sonically or visually—except maybe some mic's (and not always that). Quality counts here as much as if not more than it does in the studio.

Now, I'm *not* attempting to brand the Oak Customs as a "live" kit. (They'd *smoke* in the studio, especially in a high-energy situation.) I'm just saying that here we have a kit with all the attributes of the pro "studio" kits, except that the oak shells provide more "cut," along with stunning visual appeal. Both of these qualities take an already proven design and make it almost perfect for use in front of an audience—which, after all, is where most drummers still spend the majority of their playing time.

THE NUMBERS

Configuration: 8x10 and 9x12 rack toms, 14x15 floor tom with legs, 17x22 bass drum, and 5½x14 snare drum. (Additional 7x14 snare drum reviewed separately). Shells of 100% oak. Bass drum 7-ply, toms and snare 6-ply, with no reinforcing rings. Toms and snare fitted with 2.3 mm steel hoops; bass drum fitted with matching wood hoops. Toms equipped with clear Remo Ambassador heads, snare drum equipped with coated Ambassador batter and Ambassador snare-side head, bass drum equipped with clear PowerStroke 3 batter and Ebony PowerStroke 3 front head.

Prices: shell pack including tom mount . . . . . **$2,679/$2,409** (glossy/matte)
7x14 snare . . . . . **$420/$360** (glossy/matte)
(714) 522-9011, www.yamahadrums.com.



Quick Looks

E-Pad! Practice Pads

What sets an E-Pad! apart from other practice pads is its softer feel. The "E" stands for Enduraflex, which is the rubber-like playing-surface material. It's difficult to get much bounce from this pad, so it's definitely not the thing to use for perfecting your tight orchestral buzz rolls. But for those whose technique involves more finger and wrist control, the E-Pad! is a much more realistic practice option than using a pillow—which many drummers employ in order to ensure that they are totally controlling the sticks when using such techniques as double strokes.

The softer surface of the E-Pad! would also be beneficial to drummers who tend to slam the stick into the drum, and who experience pain when playing that way on a traditional pad. The softer surface absorbs a lot of the shock. The E-Pad! is also quieter than most other practice pads.

The wooden bottom of each E-Pad! has a non-skid surface so that the pad can be placed directly on a drum or tabletop. The 9" EP9 ($37) and the 12" EP12 ($54) are each about an inch and a half thick, so they can easily be mounted on a snare drum stand. For that matter, they rest comfortably on your lap. (Models introduced since this review are fitted with threaded inserts for mounting on cymbal stands.)

There are also EP12 Custom models ($72) with White Marine Pearl and Blue Fusion wraps around the side of the pads.

It is often said that practicing on a pad is no substitute for practicing on a full kit. That's true for a number of reasons, one of which is that a single pad can't account for the difference in response between a tight snare drum head and less taut tom heads. Even a complete practice-pad kit doesn't address that problem if all the pads are the same. To play effective fills and solo patterns around the full kit, one must use a slightly different technique for the toms than for the snare drum.

E-Pad! is, in fact, planning to offer a pad set in a snare/two toms/bass drum configuration, but it wasn't available for this review. So I set up a "regular" pad (a RealFeel) in the snare drum position and then set EP9 and EP12 E-Pads in the rack tom and floor tom positions. I found that to be a pretty good approximation of a real kit, as the difference between the harder surface of the RealFeel surface and softer E-Pad! surface was comparable to the difference between snare drum and tom heads.

Two models of KneePads are also available from E-Pad! with 7x5½" playing surfaces and adjustable leg straps. The Standard version ($37) weighs 7 ounces; the ProDeluxe model ($42.90), which has more padding, weighs 8 ounces.

The company also offers two stick bags. The SP1 ($29.95) has a compartment specifically designed for a KneePad, while the larger SP2 ($44.95) has a pocket that will accommodate an EP9.

(818) 788-4335, www.epadco.com.

Rick Mattingly

New Sabian Models

Something Old, Something New, And Something...Fierce

HITS

Fierce line offers short, trashy, explosive crash

20" HH Anniversary medium ride provides great jazz features

16" AA Anniversary AA thin crash very versatile

21" HHX Groove Ride has jazzy pop sound with solid bell

by Mike Haid

Lately, Sabian's advertising focus has been on their HHX Evolution line, developed with Dave Weckl (and reviewed in the June *MD*). That's a fine series, but it isn't all that Sabian's been up to in recent months. They've also added several other interesting items to their catalog. Let's check 'em out.

Anniversary Models

This year marks Sabian's twentieth anniversary. They're celebrating the event with special Anniversary versions of two of their earliest and most successful models: the 20" HH medium ride and the 16" AA thin crash.

The 20" HH Anniversary edium ride has many subtle overtones that will appeal to jazzier players. Its attractive brilliant finish coats the overtones, allowing a sweet stick attack that, combined with its gentle wash, gives off an excellent jazz vibe. The stick definition would get lost in loud musical situations, unless you're recording and can close-mike the cymbal. Also, the attack varies greatly depending on the type of stick you use. The bell can be heard, but it doesn't bite or cut through in loud "live" situations. The cymbal also has good crash properties when used as a crash/ride. Overall, for recording and for most live performance situations, the 20" Anniversary HH medium ride is a gem.

The 16" Anniversary AA thin crash has all the characteristics that a versatile thin crash should provide. It's quick, bright, full-bodied, and smooth, without being piercing. It has just the right amount of body when struck gently, and it explodes with a sharp attack when smacked. There are no exciting visual features to this beauty, with its basic lathed look, but that's okay. The sound it generates is its main attraction. It's a great all-around crash.

21" HHX Groove Ride

The 21" HHX Groove Ride has a lot of what has always appealed to the aficionados of old Turkish-made rides. Its thin design offers plenty of "wash" and trashy ride qualities that jazz players drool over. On the other hand, the bell—which usually is non-existent on a ride such as this—is thick, solid, and direct.

This cymbal's airy demeanor would certainly make it appropriate as a jazz-style ride. But many new styles of pop, including neo-soul and hip-hop, are using this type of sound as well, making the Groove Ride a valid candidate for today's soul sound. (And you get the bonus of its solid bell sound for those off-beat accents). Stick attack is not as direct as that produced by the HH Anniversary 20" medium ride, so if you're looking for a solid "ping" you'll have to look elsewhere.

Jojo Mayer Fierce Crashes

Following the success of the Jojo Mayer Fierce ride, Sabian has introduced the Jojo Mayer Fierce crash. Jojo requested a crash that responded with "a raw and ferocious tone...something that would be really fierce." Sabian has come through quite well on that order. We were sent the entire line: 16", 17", 18", and 19" sizes in both natural and brilliant finishes.

The Fierce crash line combines the speed and explosiveness of a thin "traditional" crash with the raw aggressiveness and dirty tone of a thin China cymbal. The cymbals feature deeply lathed and heavily hammered surfaces and a large bell that is lathed but not hammered. The thin design of the Fierce crash prompts a sharp response and rapid decay that would be heavenly in the studio, as well as for many other playing situations. One unique aspect is that the cymbals maintain a consistent dark wave of sound when struck at any volume.

The Fierce line should work in most musical situations, although it would probably get lost in loud rock (unless you're recording) because of its mellow tones. The *attack* is "fierce," but the cymbals then exhibit a very warm decay that fades quickly in a loud environment. The only variation in sound between the brilliant and the natural models was that the brilliants had a little brighter attack. (I do think the brilliant finish *looks* cooler on stage.)

As you'd expect, the 16" and 17" sizes reacted with a shorter attack and decay than the 18" and 19" sizes did. The larger cymbals really exploded when struck aggressively. But all sizes emit an immediate wash for radiant cymbal swells. These are some of the most expressive crash cymbals for jazz, recording, and low to mid-volume playing that you'll find on today's market.

Overall

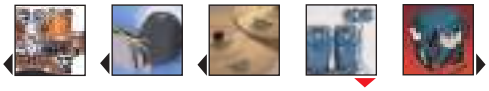
The Fierce line of crashes offers a sweet sound that no other cymbal manufacturer has been able to capture. The 16" AA Anniversary thin crash is a "sure bet" for a multi-purpose crash. The 20" HH Anniversary medium ride is likewise a great all-around ride. I can envision the 21" HHX Groove Ride as a big seller due to its unique sound and its ability to offer a smooth subtle wash with a solid bell. Sabian is doing all the right things to develop a new generation of cymbal sounds.

THE NUMBERS

20" HH Anniversary medium ride	$375
16" AA Anniversary thin crash	$206
21" HHX Groove Ride	$411
Signature Fierce Crashes	
16"	$276
17"	$301
18"	$324
19"	$353

(Prices are the same for natural and brilliant finish)

(506) 272-2019, www.sabian.com.



Toca Premiere Series Congas And Bongos

Anybody Know "Stormy Weather"?

HITS

consistent all-weather performance

good cut and projection

durable and road-worthy

MISSES

synthetic shells and heads can't produce "natural" feel

very limited finish options

by Norman Arnold

Have a steady outdoor gig? Live in Miami? Bugged by constantly adjusting your tuning and fiddling to get a good sound when you play on humid days? Well hold on to your umbrella, because Toca just may have the congas and bongos for you.

Toca's Premiere series of professional congas and bongos is promoted as being for "all-weather performance." It's certainly that—and a bunch of other things too. It's a very practical line of drums. I wish I'd had a set when I was touring in South America back in the day, before decent synthetic heads were available. I vividly remember trying desperately to get a calf conga head on a wooden drum to make a decent sound while playing a concert outside in what was practically a rain forest. Ugh. If you've experienced a similar situation, you'll know what a pain it is. So I'm definitely on board with regard to consistency of sound and this all-weather concept.

Conga Sound

I played all three drums on the floor, with the quinto tilted up just a bit. They sounded well balanced together. They also reflect the fiberglass nature of their shells: a bright, ringy tone that's not particularly warm, but will project well in a live setting. You won't have any trouble getting a solid and consistent slap out of the quinto.

The drums record pretty well too. Again, under the microphone they are bright and tight. If you have a set of congas with wooden shells and bison-skin heads that you cherish for recording purposes, the Premiere drums would be a good second set for the road or other gigs. Aside from their all-weather advantages, they'd offer a nice balance in sound and style.

Hardware And Aesthetics

Premiere congas ship with Remo FiberSkyn heads. These heads feel kind of dry, but all in all they're a good match for the fiberglass shells, serving the all-weather concept very well.

The chrome-plated EasyPlay hoops feel great. The rim is big and very low on the drum, so it's really unnoticeable when playing. The lugs and rims are solid and well manufactured.

The only aesthetic question I have is about the color choices. According to the literature provided with the drums, they're available only in red/black fade and metallic blue. I'm no arbiter of fashion or color co-ordination, but for my money I'd like a few more choices—even simple ones, like solid black, red, or white. After all, the all-weather concept is especially applicable for touring, where visual appeal is important.

Applications

Speaking of aesthetics: Fiberglass shells and synthetic heads are, as advertised, very solid and reliable. This is a good thing. But you definitely give up something in the balance. There is something about the drums that doesn't really inspire me to wail away on them. Maybe it's that lack of warmth in the sound. For me, half the fun of being a hand percussionist is the "skin on skin" feel...the connection to what you are playing. There's something natural about it. The overly synthetic thing just kind of feels funny to me. Weatherproof, yes—but also kind of "vibe-proof," as well.

Obviously, Toca understands such feelings, because they also manufacture a great selection of wood drums with natural skin heads, like their Traditional and Custom Deluxe series. So I look at the Premiere congas as a great alternative. They're perfect for a high-school or college music program—including marching. They'd be just the thing for a house band at an outdoor venue. Basically, they'd be great for anyone who wants an easy, practical, and virtually indestructible set of congas to play under any and all atmospheric conditions.

The Bongos

I dig the Bongos. In this case the FiberSkyn heads and fiberglass shells work well together to produce a bright, sharp, and focused sound that really cuts. I like bongos tuned pretty high, and these sounded good in a variety of ranges. I think they'd work great in just about any situation. They also proved a really nice combination with the congas.

The drums and rims were comfortable when played sitting down. (You salseros won't have to worry about them cutting into your legs after a long set.) Bongos are available in the same color choices as congas, and stands can be purchased separately.

Conclusion

Premiere congas and bongos are a great balance for the Toca line. While they can serve in almost any musical situation, they're especially suited for the musician playing outdoors or touring in humid locations. They offer bright, penetrating sounds along with outstanding playing comfort. And they're priced reasonably, considering their construction quality and durability. A nice package!

THE NUMBERS

Congas

11" Quinto (22 lbs.) **$369.50**
11¾" Conga (25½ lbs.) **$399.50**
12½" Tumba (27 lbs.) **$429.50**
All drums are 30" tall.

Bongos

7" Macho & 8½" Hembra (9¾ lbs.) **$229.50**
All congas and bongos feature fiberglass shells and Remo FiberSkyn heads.

(860) 509-8888, www.kamanmusic.com.

Kaces Gregg Bissonette Seat Stick Bag

It's a terrible feeling. There you are, at a gig, in the middle of a tune, when you realize that you've just broken a stick—and your stick bag is out of reach. And of course, at that exact moment, the bandleader turns to you and says, "Drum solo!" *Gulp*.

Alex Solca

Well, from the brilliant minds of the folks at Kaces and drumming great Gregg Bissonette comes a product that eliminates the problem of sticks being out of reach. In fact, the Gregg Bissonette Seat Stick Bag places your sticks, brushes, mallets, and accessories directly underneath you.

Here's how it works: When open, the Bissonette bag wraps over and around your throne, positioning the sticks just below the top edge of your seat. The bag has pockets all the way around (it can accommodate *many* pairs of sticks, mallets, and brushes) so you can reach sticks with either hand. All you do is drop your hand down and grab—just like the "quick draw" of a gunfighter. It's the best possible place to position sticks, because you can get to them fast and without anyone knowing. (It's perfect for players who break a lot of sticks or who make a lot of stick changes during the course of a gig.)

Most drummers hang their stick bag on a floor tom, which certainly puts sticks within easy reach—of your right hand. But doing that can affect the sound of your drum. And if you're using suspended floor toms, do you really want to add *more* weight to the stand and mount by having your bag attached?

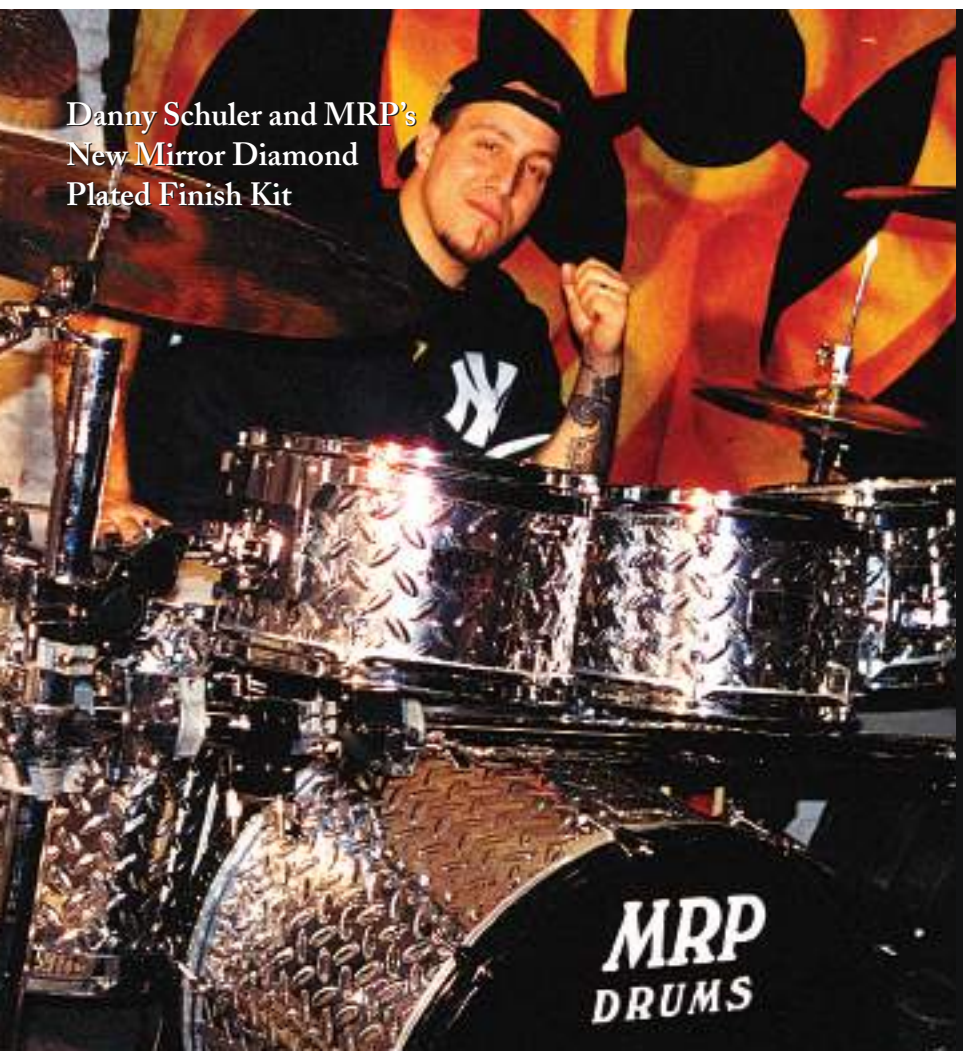
The Bissonette bag is made of luggage-grade nylon, which is a rugged material. (Since you're sitting on it, the rough texture might wear out certain pant fabrics over time.) The bag has multiple pockets, a nylon carrying handle, and a hook-and-loop fastener wrap for holding the bag closed. (FYI, the bag is a little trickier to open and close than a regular stick bag is, because of its shape.)

According to Kaces, the bag will fit a throne up to 18" in diameter. As an experiment, I tried to place it on a bicycle-type (triangular) seat, with mixed results. (It's best for round seats.)

At $39.95 list, the Bissonette Seat Stick Bag is one of the most inexpensive large-capacity stick bags on the market. Because of its ability to position sticks right where you need them, it's one of the best.

(415) 492-9600, www.aceproducts.com.

William F. Miller



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The Goo Goo Dolls'

Mike Malinin

Pop-Rock Precision

Story by Waleed Rashidi
Photos by Alex Solca

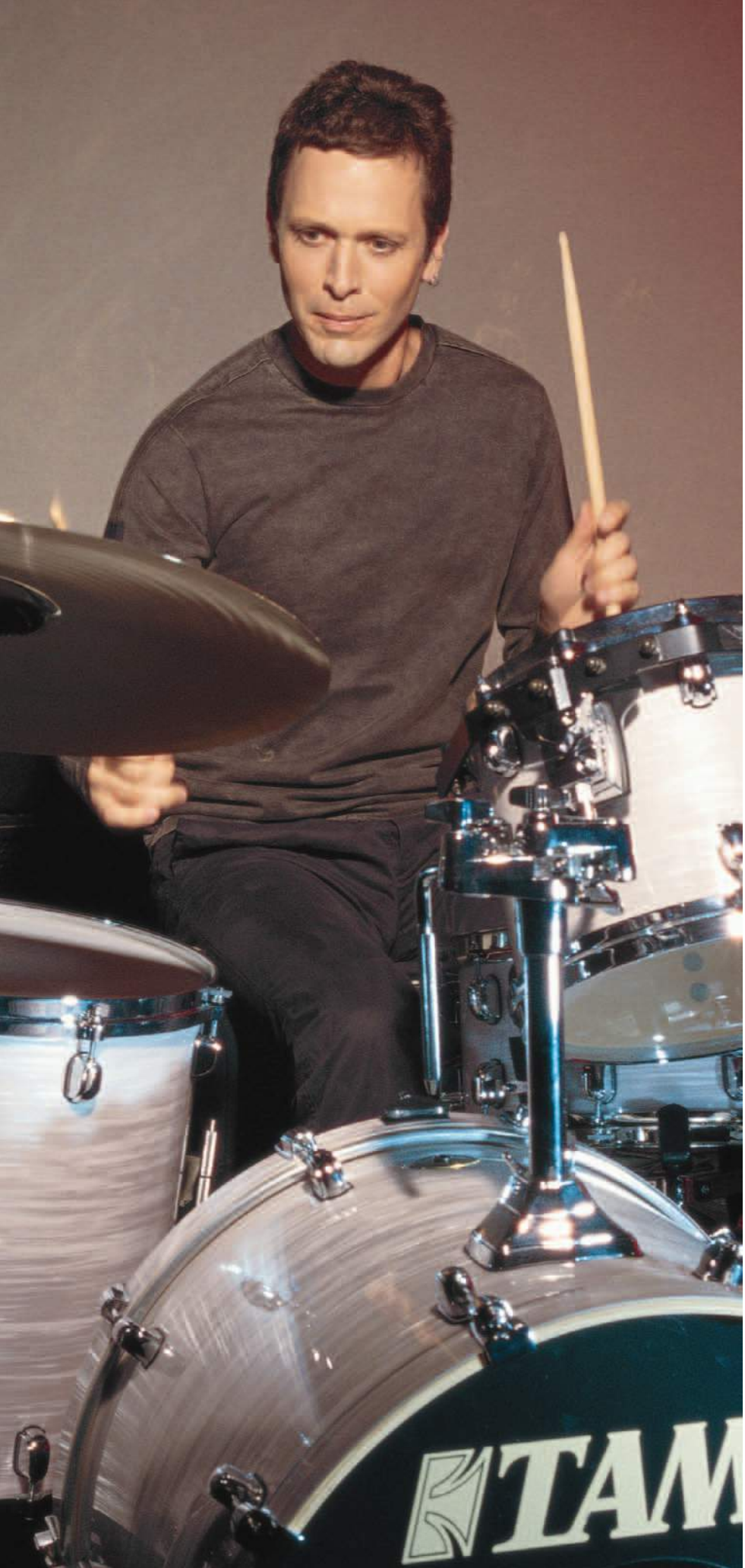
Star-Cast

Intelligent, precise, cautious, attentive, responsive—just some of the adjectives that could be used to describe the playing of Goo Goo Dolls drummer Mike Malinin. Though he's the newest member of the Buffalo, New York–based power-pop-rock trio, the Miami native's playing both on and off the stage with the group could easily fool one into believing he had been an integral part of the act since their inception in the mid-'80s.

Malinin signed on with The Goos just after completion of their breakthrough 1995 release, *Boy Named Goo*. So Mike did have a few years to refine his chops with his new buddies, guitarist/vocalist John Rzeznik and bassist/vocalist Robby Takac, before laying his sounds to tape on 1998's platinum-selling *Dizzy Up The Girl*. And when the call came for Malinin to track radio-friendly hit singles like "Slide" and "Iris," he had proved that his detailed, calculated rock drive was as potent on record as had already been displayed in years past on stage.

Four years, several more tours, and over three million records later, the friendly and warm Malinin entered the studio once again (for an extremely brief session) to nail down his tracks for the band's latest smash, *Gutterflower*. And yet again, Malinin has more than proved his prowess as a hard-grooving, straight-ahead, no-nonsense rock skinsman.

Scoping out his passionate yet tactful approach on *Gutterflower* tracks like "Think About Me" and "Big Machine," listeners immediately recognize Malinin as any pop-rock band's dream drummer. Although there's nothing overly technical coming from the set of Starclassics Malinin drives, everything simply feels great. And perhaps that's why Rzeznik and Takac are Malinin's most satisfied passengers.



MD: Any changes on the kit setup this time around for recording *Gutterflower*?
Mike: I used a five-piece on the album. It gave me a little more to work with.
MD: Getting a little tired of just four drums?
Mike: It was just time for a change—get that rack tom back. I noticed when I started using this setup in the studio it just felt fresh. It's like I hadn't done this before. I used to always play the five-piece, but in '93 I started playing the four-piece. I like playing small sets. Too many people surround themselves with too much crap that they don't really need.
MD: For the new album it seems you went out of your way to make it a real production.
Mike: We did spend a little more time on it. We had that luxury, sort of, to be in the studio for a few months. There wasn't really much of a deadline, because originally we were like, "Let's get the record out before the end of 2001." But we realized that was a silly idea because we were rushing ourselves. We spent a lot more time on the mixes, because none of us were really happy with the mixes on *Dizzy*, for a bunch of different reasons.
MD: For instance?
Mike: Well, the drums sounded like crap, which bothered me! [laughs] We would record, and it would sound really awesome, but I think the whole record was smoothed over a little bit in the mixing. And I'm not a big fan of [engineer/producer] Jack Joseph Puig's drum sounds. They're not really that aggressive. But *Gutterflower* is a lot more aggressive. Tom Lord-Alge gets awesome drum sounds, and he's easy to work with.
MD: What are some of the things he did to your drum sound that you like?
Mike: He kept them more natural.
MD: Using more room mic's perhaps?
Mike: I think so. I've never understood why, with today's technology, it's so hard to get good drum sounds. Go back and listen to [The Who's] *Who's Next*. The drums sound better than any other recording ever made, and that was thirty years ago.

I think a lot of it is that guys try to do too much. You spend so much time getting a vintage drumset sounding just right and use classic mic's—and then the mixer takes it, compresses the hell out of the

drum tracks, and adds samples! But I was really happy this time with my drum sound. I think it sounds the way my drums do naturally.

I never understood the theory behind compression, which is when things get played on the radio, all the levels max out and you need the compression to be able to hear everything. But once again, play a Zeppelin record. Sounds pretty good, doesn't it?

MD: What do you look for in a snare sound?

Mike: I don't like a snare to sound fuzzy. I want to hear the attack. If it's not clear, what's the point? [Producer] Rob Cavallo's really heavy on that too. He'll stop a track and say, "I think you need to hit your drum harder."

MD: So you really slam in the studio?

Mike: Oh yeah.

MD: Did you use a variety of snare drums for the record?

Mike: Yeah, I actually used five different snares. Some of them I remember specifically from older recordings. Like on "Iris," I used a 5" Ludwig Black Beauty. You've gotta have a Black Beauty on every recording. It's the most classic drum in the world.

I just got a Tama sort-of Black Beauty copy, and it's awesome. It's a great drum, so I'll be pulling that one out a bit more. But my stock snare is a Starclassic $6\frac{1}{2}$" maple drum. It's a good snare and it's on most of the record. It's got a good ring.

MD: I've noticed you're not afraid to let a little over-ring cut through with your snare sound. In some instances it's almost become your trademark.

Mike: There's barely any muffling on my snare drums—just a little bit of tape on the top head. Live, I try to get away with nothing, but it doesn't always work.

One of the cool things that happened in the '90s is that drums were allowed to sound like drums again. The quality of the drums went down so far in the '80s. All of the stock kits made by the big companies just kind of sucked. I think DW sort of brought everybody out of that rut because they started making real drums again, and all of a sudden it forced Tama, Pearl, and everybody else to make good drums. And now everyone's making a great product.

If you're going to spend the time making drums that resonate well, why would you want to muffle them? I remember when I was a kid, Dead Ringers were the big thing—you know, the foam circles that attached to your heads. When I first started playing, I had a set with single-headed toms with Dead Ringers on the heads. And they just sounded like nothing. But you didn't have to worry about tuning them! [laughs]

MD: Let's talk about your tracking session for *Gutterflower*. Did everything go smoothly?

Mike: I was there for two and a half days. I was done pretty quickly.

MD: That's impressive.

Mike: Actually, I tracked four songs on a Monday, and then I did four on Tuesday, and on Wednesday I did the last three. But after listening to what I had done on Monday, I wasn't happy with the tracks. So I did them all over again on Wednesday. So it actually took two days to record the drums. I ended up being very happy with what I played.

MD: Are you pretty easy to please?

Mike: Not at all. I think we just did a lot

Clam Free

Goo Goo Dolls' John Rzeznik On Malinin

Back in 1995, when the time came for The Goo Goo Dolls to fill their vacant drum throne, it only took one jam session for the already-established rock act to select current stickslinger Mike Malinin. Part of the selection team included guitarist/vocalist John Rzeznik, who has penned and sung a majority of the band's most successful songs to date, including their breakthrough track, "Name," from their Warner/Metal Blade release *A Boy Named Goo*.

Rzeznik recalls the day he and bassist/vocalist Robby Takac first met with Malinin for the audition. "Mike was the only guy we heard," he says. "We played twenty songs the first time we rehearsed with him, and he played them exceptionally well. Then we talked to Mike for a while and he seemed like a nice guy. So Robby and I went into the hallway and we said to each other, 'What do you think? You think we could take him in a fight?' And we were like, 'Yeah, I think we could take him. Okay, that's cool!' And that's how he wound up with the gig."

With his position secured, Malinin quickly bonded with his new bandmates and began touring and recording with the act. Rzeznik immediately began to take notice of Malinin's most shining qualities, including his open-mindedness and his ability to get things done expeditiously, plus the understanding and open communication he had built with his bandmates on a musical level. The recording session for *Gutterflower* was no exception.

According to Rzeznik, "It was interesting in the studio this time. It was really funny because we were recording one of the songs, and I wanted to hear a certain fill that I was singing. I was going, 'tat tat doodlee doom boom boom pish,' but it wasn't working. But Mike has this great ability—you tell him to play like a certain drummer and he'll play exactly like him. For that fill it was, 'Well, what would Stewart Copeland do?' And Mike recorded a perfect Stewart Copeland fill. So then I just kept throwing different drummers' names at him, and he got 'em all—and on tape! We listened back to all of the fills, and then we told him to combine a couple drummers. It was cool."

Though Rzeznik might appear to be very specific about what he wants, he does note that he presents quite an open playing field for Malinin. "'I present the 'boom-bop-boom-boom-bop, there ya go, that's it.' And then I'm like, 'Mike, I want you to do what you want in there. Just mix it up.'"

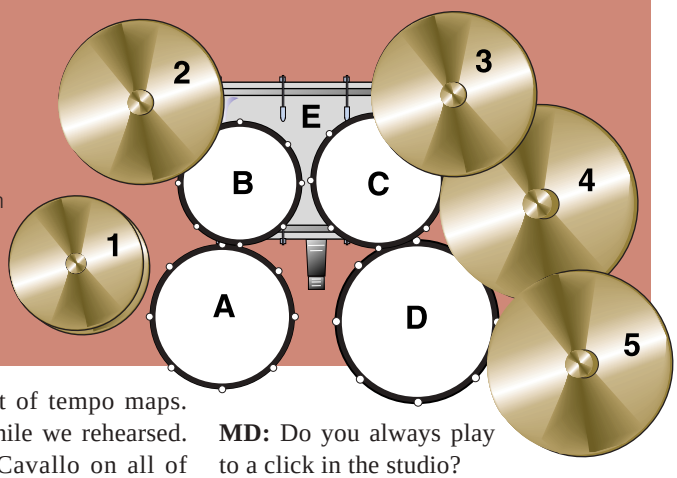
As for what role Malinin plays in the band, Rzeznik says, "He's the stable unit among all of us. Day in and day out, he's the most consistent musically. He just doesn't have a bad day on the drums. It's bizarre, because it's so rare that he does clam that when it happens, I almost crap my pants! It's like, 'Jesus, what in the hell just happened?' I'll look at him and go, 'What was that? You *never* screw up!'"

Mike's "Gutter" Kit

Drums: Tama Starclassic in white satin finish
A. 6½x14 maple snare
B. 8x12 tom
C. 9x13 tom
D. 16x16 floor tom
E. 18x22 bass drum

Cymbals: Zildjian
1. 14" Quick Beat hi-hats
2. 18" A Custom medium crash
3. 18" A Custom medium-thin crash
4. 21" A Custom medium ride
5. 20" China

Percussion: LP mountable tambourine
Hardware: All Tama, including an Iron Cobra pedal (relatively tight spring tension) with felt beater
Heads: Remo coated Emperor on snare batter (minimal tape for muffling), coated Ambassadors on tops of toms with clear Ambassadors on bottoms (no muffling), clear PowerStroke 3 on bass drum batter (old pillow for muffling)
Sticks: Zildjian Vinnie Colaiuta or 5B model (hickory, usually with wood tip, sometimes nylon)
Mic's: Audix



of pre-production beforehand, so we knew what was happening when we went into the studio. I was prepared. A few things changed afterwards, and there were a couple of instances where I had to come back in like a week later because we needed an intro or some other spot redone to fit a change they made in an arrangement.

MD: So what were some of the things you did to prep yourself for the studio?

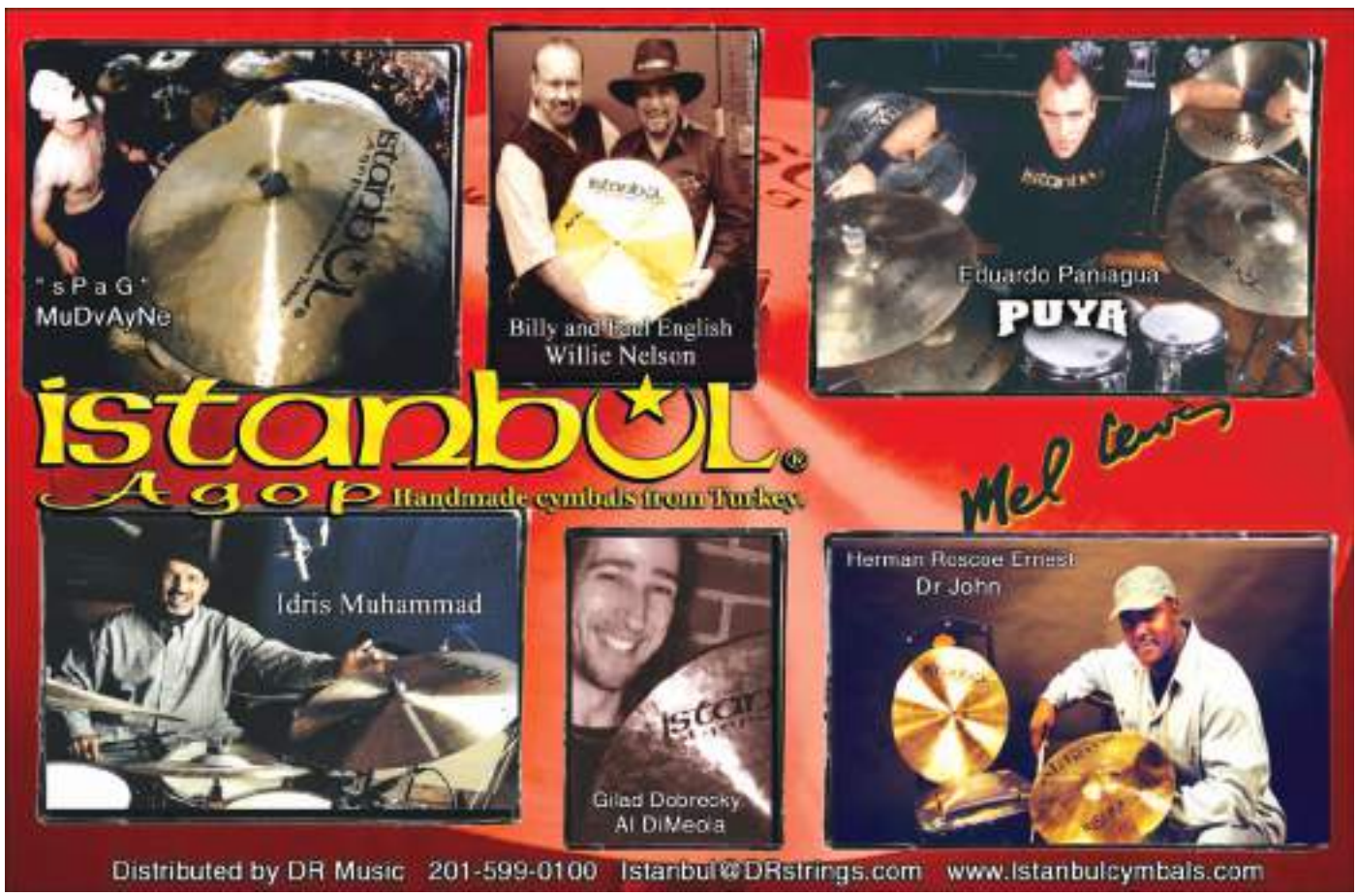
Mike: We created a lot of tempo maps. We figured it all out while we rehearsed. We worked with Rob Cavallo on all of that. It's weird playing to tempo maps, because with them you have clicks that slow down and speed up in certain parts. We figured out where we wanted them to go, and then we rehearsed with them. By the time I went into the studio, I was totally familiar with what was going on.

MD: Do you always play to a click in the studio?

Mike: Oh, ninety-five percent of the time.

MD: When would be the five percent that you wouldn't?

Mike: For whatever reason, some songs flow a little more naturally without a click. Some of our tempo maps, like when we did "Black Balloon" on the last album,



I remember that by the time that song was over, it was 7 or 8 bpms faster than when it started. That was a weird tempo map, because it sped up and slowed down so much. But normally it would be something like 80 bpm for most of a song, and then around 82 for the chorus, and then it would go back to 81 or whatever.

MD: Why wouldn't you just average it all out to 81?

Mike: It doesn't work. It's weird! [laughs] We probably worry about that stuff more than we should, but it all works out in the end. I don't know how a lot of other bands do it, but this band definitely spends the most time during pre-production worrying about the minute details. That sometimes is a real pain, because it's like, is this really going to matter? But when the recording light comes on, it does matter.

MD: What are some of those minute things?

Mike: Johnny will be really particular sometimes about things like lead-in fills. He'll be like, "I don't like that." So I'll try something else, and a lot of times it ends up being the simplest thing you could imagine. This time around, it was a little different because they actually wanted me to play a little bit more in spots, which is really cool and made me want to go up to a five-piece kit.

MD: Do you tend to over-play?

Mike: No. I'm always the other way around. I just try to be musical. Drums can be so obnoxious. I've never been a fan of those kinds of players, with some exceptions. Keith Moon is my favorite drummer ever. But, it's like, he could do it. It's his personality that comes through so hard on his performance, and it makes it that much more exciting.

MD: How much of your personality do you see in your playing?

Mike: I try to blend into the song. One of my other favorite drummers, who's the king of that, is Stan Lynch, who used to be with Tom Petty. He's just a phenomenal drummer, one of those great, overlooked drummers because he never really played that much. But what he did play was so tasteful. I try to think along those lines.

How many times have you seen a band

Goo Listening

Here are some recordings Mike listens to for inspiration.

Artist	Recording	Drummer
The Who	Who's Next	Keith Moon
Cheap Trick	Budokan	Bun E. Carlos
The Police	Reggatta de Blanc	Stewart Copeland
Soundgarden	Badmotorfinger	Matt Cameron
Tom Petty	Greatest Hits	Stan Lynch
U2	War	Larry Mullen Jr.
Motor Ace	Five Star Laundry	Damian Costin
Scratch Acid	Berserker	Rey Washam

where the drummer is trying to show off? I'm sorry to say this, but it's not about the drummer, it's about the music. When I play, I want the music to be good and I want the song to be good.

MD: In addition to the new rack tom, are there any other changes to your setup?

Mike: I've actually added a China cymbal, which is funny because I hit a China exactly four times on the album. But yeah, it'll be there and I'll hit it four times during the set! [laughs] Nah, actually, I've found a couple of other places to use it. I've avoided Chinas in the past because they can get really obnoxious. You've got to use them carefully.

I've never changed my setup much; I've never really been gung-ho about my setup. My cymbals change a lot, the sizes and thicknesses. I just changed my ride in fact. I'm using a Zildjian 21" A Custom, which I really like. But I was using a 20" Ping for the whole last tour.

MD: Why the change?

Mike: I used to use a 21" medium ride, which is what I used my whole life, but Zildjian stopped making it. So I went to a 20" Ping, which was cool. But now they're making 21" mediums in the A Custom line, and it's just a little washier.

MD: It must be easy swapping stuff around when you have an endorsement deal.

Mike: I bought a Tama Artstar kit in '95, and then after that I basically begged my way into an endorsement deal. I knew what I wanted to play. So many guys get locked into endorsements with anyone that'll give 'em stuff. We hadn't really broken yet, but I kept calling Tama anyway. And then when things started to roll for us and we appeared on Letterman, I'd call the guys at Tama and say, "I hope you noticed I was playing a Tama drumset on Letterman!"

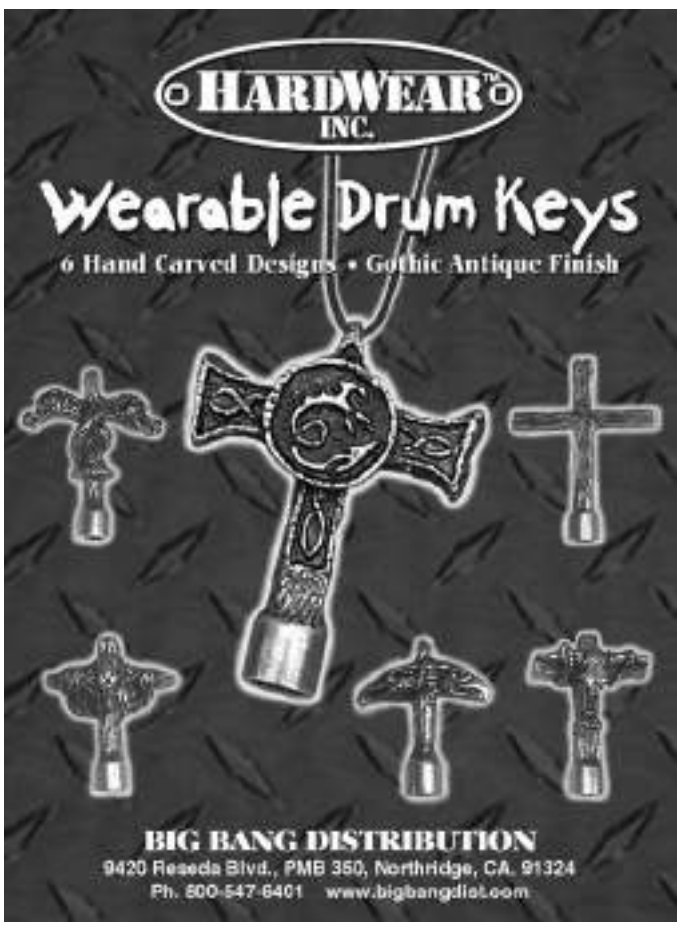
MD: You make it sound like they gave you a free kit just to get you off their backs!

Mike: Yeah, exactly! [laughs] The endorsement guys at companies have to be like A&R guys. They have to guess who'll break and also beat out the other companies. But I was really gung-ho about what I wanted to play. I was like, "I only want to play Tama and Zildjian, and I'm gonna wait until they give me a deal."

MD: How'd you get your start on drums?

Mike: I started the summer between sixth and seventh grade. I'm the youngest of four kids, my mom's a classical violinist, and because everyone else played an instrument, it was like, "You're going to play an instrument." I just liked the drums—they were cool. I took lessons from a guy named Mike Cottom in Salt Lake City. Hopefully he'll read this, because I haven't talked to him in years. He was a really good instructor, which I realized years later. After moving to Miami, I eventually took lessons for three years with a guy at the University of Miami, Harry Hawthorne. I had my stuff down and he was so impressed that he asked for the name of my teacher in Salt Lake City.

I started playing in high school cover bands, but there wasn't much of a rock scene in Miami. At the end of high school, I became a punk rock kid. I really got into Black Flag, The Clash, and The



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Sex Pistols. But I never really played in an original band until I went to college at the University of North Texas. I went there for music.

It's kind of interesting, because I went to a prep high school, and the guidance counselors there always shunned music as a career. The band director, Tim Shipley, had respected me as a musician and he sort of quietly said, "Don't worry about it, you'll make a living playing drums." He never came out and blatantly said that, but I realized it about ten years later. There's another guy I've gotta get back in touch with!

I went to North Texas sort of on a whim, because I wanted to go to music school but I didn't want to stay in Miami. So Harry Hawthorne mentioned the school and I was like, "All right, cool, I'll go there." I went to music school for one semester but didn't really like it, but it was a cool class. Matt Chamberlain was in my class. A lot of musicians come out of there.

After that, I ended up playing in a million punk rock and noise bands that were just starting off. I was having a blast. And there were so many great musicians in the area because of the school. Dallas had a great scene. Dave Abbruzzese was a Dallas musician and played on a bunch of indie records.

In '92 I moved to LA after deciding it was time to go. I was twenty-four years old, and I had sort of run the gamut in Dallas. I hadn't really made a career of it. So I came out here to LA and played around the Hollywood scene for about two and a half years. Then I got an audition for The Goo Goo Dolls and joined in January of '95.

MD: When you came into the band, were they strict about the way you played their material?

Mike: Absolutely, because they had never really played with anybody else. George Tutuska was the only drummer they had played with.

MD: So what was the audition like?

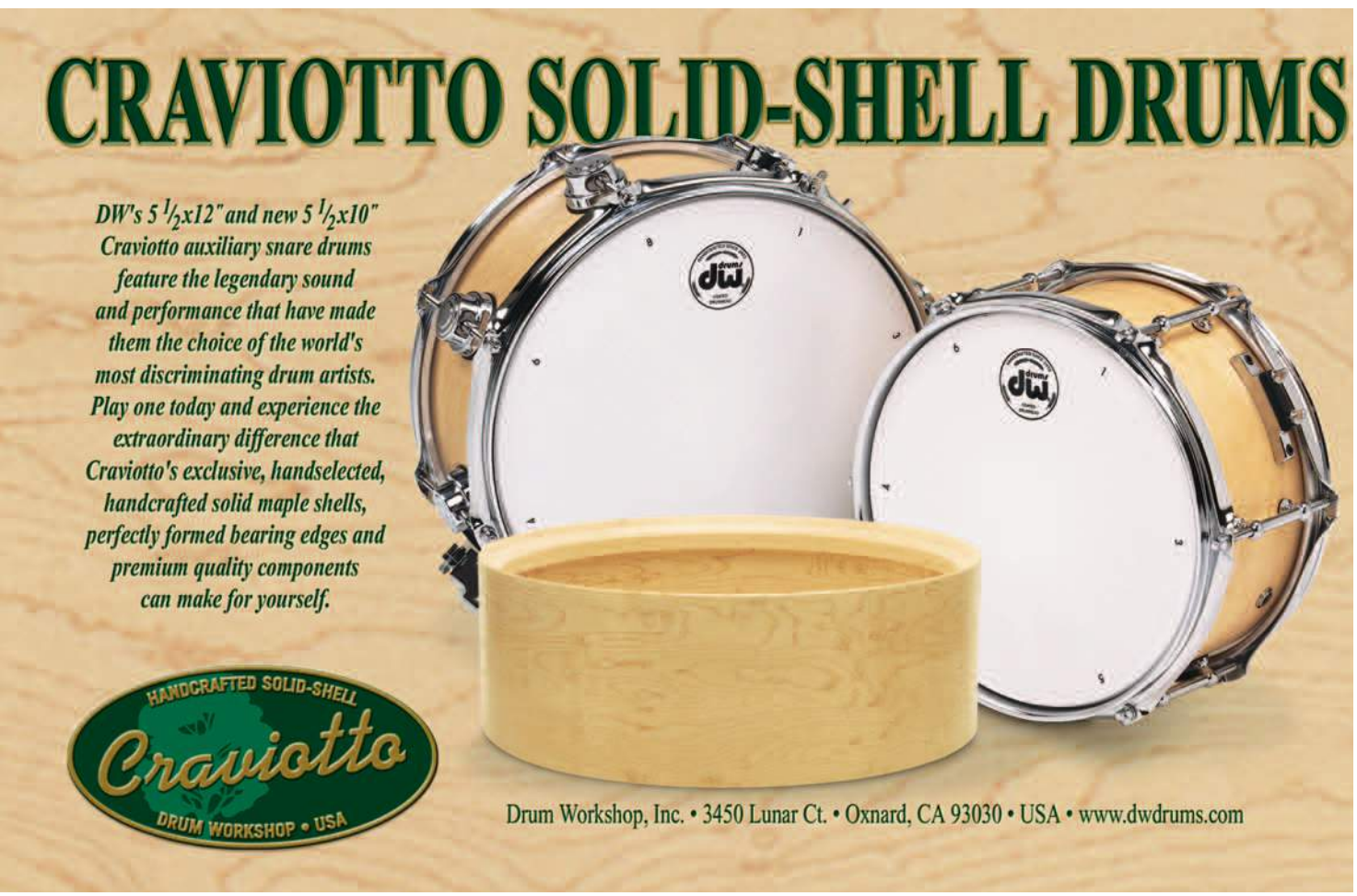
Mike: I had been a fan of the band, so that was my lucky in. I had their four previous records, so I just started calling out songs. I knew their material from having listened to them so much. But immediately, like in the first song, they stopped and said, "I think your kick pattern's wrong," and I was like, "Oh no, here we go. It's gonna be *this* way." And that's how it was for the first couple of months, until they got used to me.

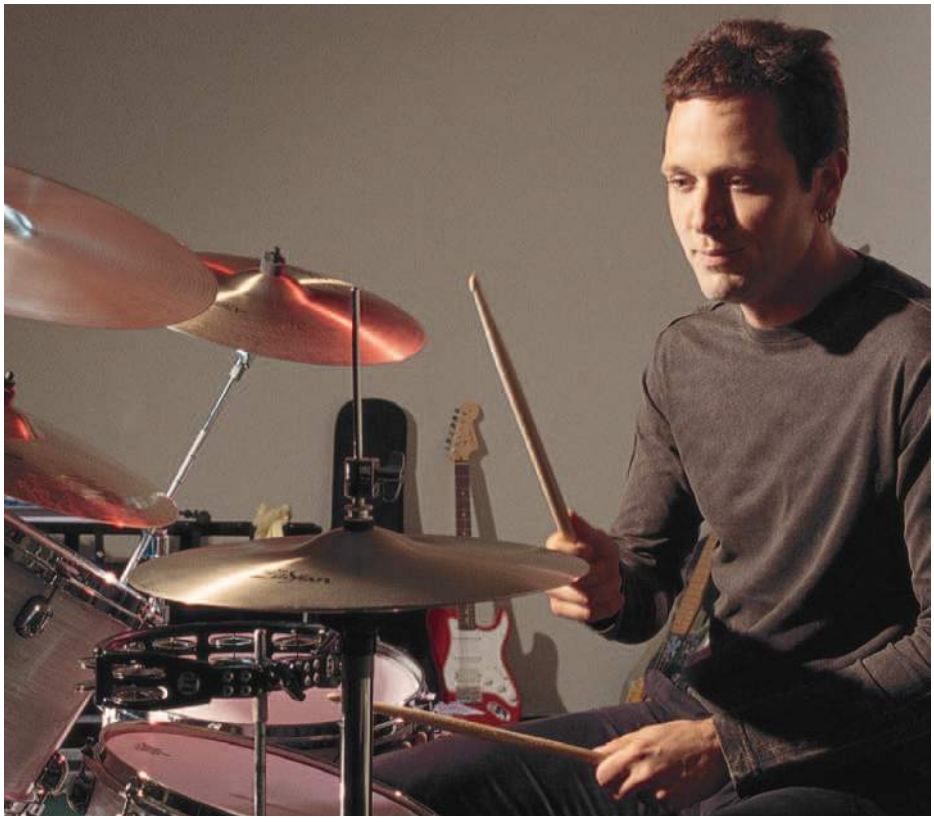
MD: Do you get to gig outside of The Goos often?

Mike: One of the things I'm trying to do more of is play outside sessions, which I don't get that much of a chance to do. The funny thing is, when I'm on tour, I get a ton of calls. But when I'm home for three months doing nothing, I get nothing. [laughs]

MD: With all of the touring you do, do you find that warming up is a good thing to do?

Mike: Well, warming up is a very good idea. I never used to do it. But when you don't, as you get older, your hands can cramp up. And I like to play harder live, so I have to do it. You just have to be careful on the road. The skin on my hands starts to wear out. Now I'm more aware of it and I try to take care of my hands by putting moisturizer on my skin before I play. But by the end of the tour I've got duct tape all over my fingers, with the





skin splitting and stuff.

But it's not as bad as it used to be. When I first joined the band, we were playing all of their old punk rock stuff. By the end of the show, I was in pain, and that was every night. But once we added "Name" to the set, it was like, here's a break.

I warm up, though. I carry a little 6" drum pad with me. In fact, ninety-five percent of my practicing is on that pad. I use heavier sticks when I practice. I love to sit down and do my rudiments.

MD: There must be a balance between playing hard and not over-exerting yourself.

Mike: Yeah, and you have to stay in shape. Running is my other passion. I'm a sick runner. I run stupid distances. I did a fifty-mile race in November.

When we're on the road, I force myself to run a few times a week. Obviously, I have the most physically demanding job in the band. It's funny, but I've known some guys who have never done a sit-up in their life and who chain smoke, and they're fine. I don't know how they do it. I couldn't!

It's weird, because I'm thirty-four now, and unfortunately, it's starting to get noticeable. As you get older, the hands and the muscles start to cramp. I haven't really had any major hand problems, though, knock on wood.

MD: Let's talk about one of the tracks on *Gutterflower*. "Up, Up, Up" has kind of a retro-rock feel to it.

Mike: That was inspired by one of my favorite drummers, Cheap Trick's Bun E. Carlos. He has that swingy rock feel that I love. He has such a groove thing going on. If anyone else played it, it would sound stupid. But when Bun E. plays it, it's perfect. He's awesome—another great, overlooked drummer.

MD: What are some terms you'd use to describe your approach to the kit?

Mike: Consistency. And I try to be musical and to be a part of the song. I've known of a lot of technically amazing drummers who could never really play well in a band.

"Truth Is A Whisper," the last song on *Gutterflower*, has a really simple Motown feel in the verse. We played it forty different ways over three and a half weeks. I'm talking subtle little differences, just trying to find out what would work perfectly for the song. Sometimes doing that type of thing drives you crazy, and you think, "Man, I just want to get home. It's not going to matter." But in the end, it really does matter.

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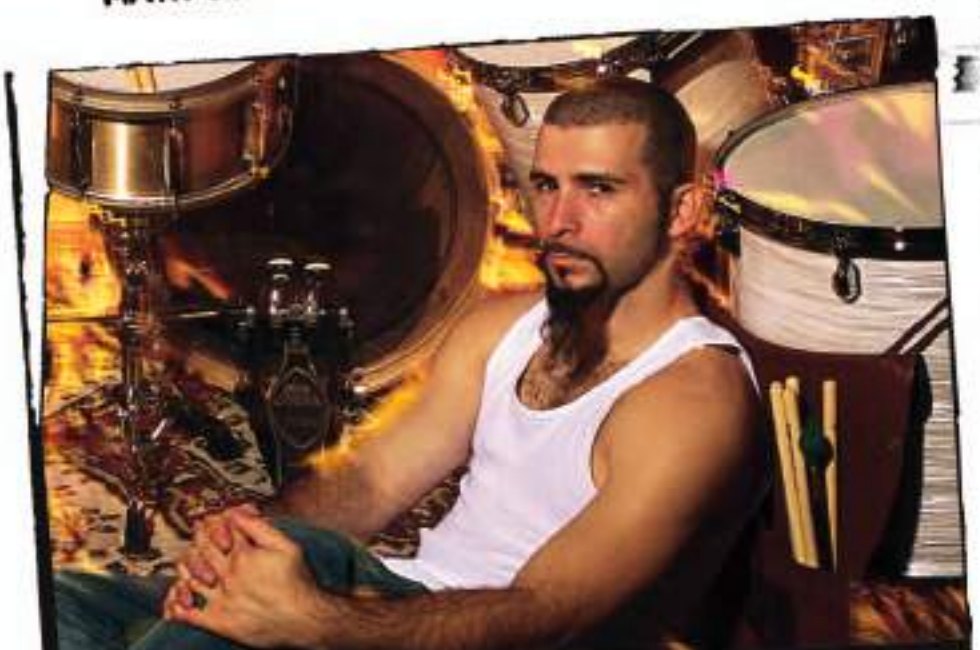

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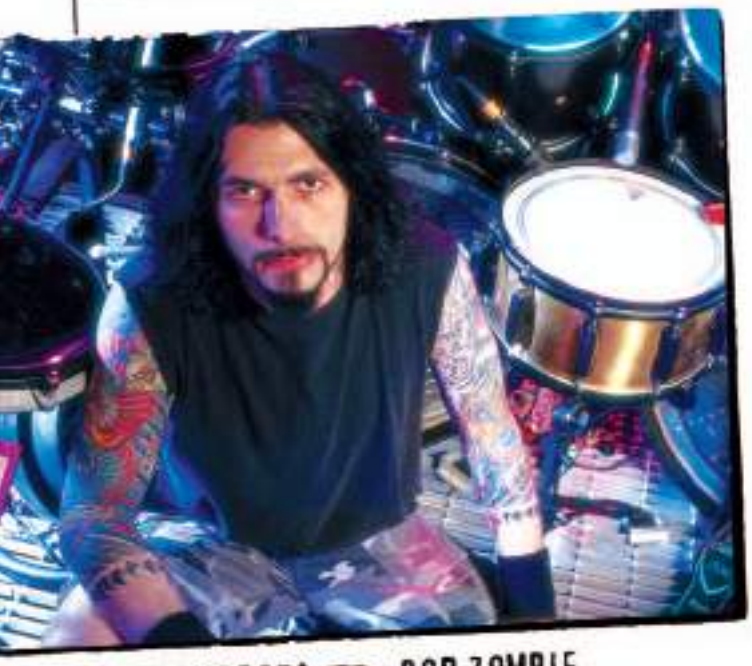

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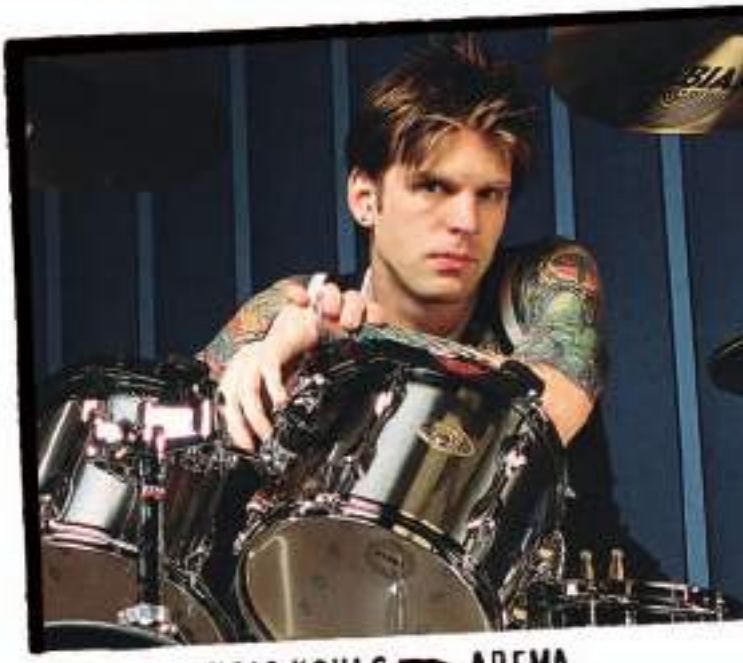

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Jeff Porcaro

A Tribute

Ten years after his passing, the drumming and music community still feels the loss of the studio giant.

Jaeger Kotos Smith

Jaeger Kotos Smith

by Robyn Flans

I consider myself among the fortunate people whose life Jeff Porcaro touched—and there are a lot of us. If Jeff Porcaro was anything, he was contagious. Being around him was like being exposed to the sun at its hottest, most warming and smiling degree. He was a ball of energy, a funny man with a laugh that still echoes happily in my ears, kind and sincere. He could mess with you in a teasing, fun way, but he never meant to hurt you. He was passionate about music, friends, and life, and he was always ready with a compliment. We met as business associates and we became friends. I don't use that word lightly, and while he had many friends, he didn't use the word superficially either. I treasure the memory of our friendship.

Few deaths have affected me in the way Jeff's passing did on August 5, 1992. The sheer loss of his energy on this earth was (and still is) devastating, and the tragedy for his family and his beautiful children—Nico, Miles, and Chris—was a pain that was hard to bear. When someone old passes, it's sad and painful for loved ones. But there is comfort in knowing that it's the correct order of the world. Jeff's passing, at thirty-eight, was a tragedy. To this day, I find myself asking Why? The absence of his musical talents on today's offerings is profound, but his legacy as a father, loved one, friend, and musician is indelible.

Randy Bachman

Lissa Wales

Lissa Wales

Jeff loved what he did. He resented anyone who put down the role of studio musician, for he took it seriously with a reverence that remained throughout his career. He truly appreciated the gig and what it took to create a song, he was always a team player, and he never cut corners. His work mattered to him, and the outcome was important. In fact, he was so self-critical that sometimes it came off as self-effacing.

During the first interview I did with Jeff in 1982, he uttered the ridiculous comment, "My time sucks." At that same time, he told me, "There's not one record that I've done that I can listen to all the way through without getting bugged at how I played."

Jeff told me, though, the Steely Dan tracks he did were his personal favorite perfor-

Paul Jonason

mances. To him they represented the coolest music he could be asked to play. In fact, at the beginning of his career, he actually quit a $1,500-a-week gig with Sonny & Cher to work with Steely Dan for $400 a week. And it wasn't always easy.

During various interviews, Jeff talked about some of those tracks, such as "Gaucho." "It was Steve Khan on guitar, Anthony Jackson on bass, Rob Mounsey on keyboards, and [Steely Dan vocalist/keyboardist] Donald Fagen. The plan was to rehearse the tune in the studio, because those guys are meticulous. You rehearse from 2:00 to 6:00, take a dinner break, and at 7:00 you come back to the studio, start the tape rolling, and start doing takes. Well, this stuff is rehearsed so heavily that some of the spontaneity is gone. They demand perfect time, and it's nerve-racking. Yet, I love it. That kind of pressure with those guys is cool, because, from my point of view, their music is the most prestigious music that's ever existed.

"So we started doing 'Gaucho,'" Jeff continued, "and they went through every musician's part so it was perfect. All they were going to keep at the end was the drum track, but most of the other musicians didn't know that. I knew it from experience. Their idea is to get everybody else in the band and put them through all the shit in the world to make sure they play perfectly, just to get the perfect drum track. And these guys are sweating—beads of sweat rolling down their foreheads—shaking while they're *playing*, and they don't know that what they're playing is never going to be used.

"We went to 3:00 in the morning, and I don't know how many takes we did. Fagen walked out in the studio and it was something like, 'Guys, does everybody know what this tune is supposed to sound like?' We're all looking at each other, going, 'Yeah!' He says, 'Good. You guys know what it should sound like, I know what it's supposed to sound like, then that's all that matters. We're done.' And he splits. So we're all sitting there in the studio like, 'What?' We all got pissed and said, 'Screw it, we're going to work on this track and get it!' So only [producer] Gary Katz was there, and we continued to do five or six more takes. That's the kind of shit where most people would have packed up and split, but we just sat there feeling we had to get it—and we did."

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Drummers Talk About The Tracks

Amazingly, when we asked some of the industry's finest players to talk about one track that Jeff Porcaro had played on, rarely did the same song title come up. It only goes to show that just about everything Jeff played on was stellar and touched someone.

Vinnie Colaiuta

I have to mention two Boz Scaggs tracks—"Gimme The Goods" [from *Down Two Then Left*] and "Jojo" [from *Middle Man*]. "Gimme The Goods" is so exciting and tight. Jeff really lays it in. No matter what he played, the time just felt *so* good. He had the best time feel. The hi-hat stuff at the end is just ridiculous. He double-times it. But the thing is the effect that you get from it. It's *music*—just spectacular, amazing. When I first heard that track, I was elated. It was breathtaking. I was excited, laughing and smiling from ear to ear 'til my face hurt.

On "Jojo" the pocket is not only deep, it is so identifiably "Jeff," as are all his tracks. Plus it conveys the character of the song so well. The way he lays the stop-time figures and then comes back in with the perfectly placed "Blap-Umm." Whew! Now *that's* drama. I can get a visual on that one. His whole approach is so spectacular—he's playing *music*. He's *inside* of it. When I first heard it I was enraptured—you know, kind of that half slack-jawed blank stare.

Everything Jeff played had so much weight, so much meaning. He was one of a kind. A very, very rare one, Jeff. So deeply missed.

Josh Freese

I happened to run into Jim Keltner recently at a studio, and he was telling a roomful of people about the time when I met Jeff and him at a PAS convention. He commented on how I was shredding and playing like a madman. I made the joke that that was back when I could play that way. Jim then started talking about how when he first met Jeff, Jeff was playing like a maniac, playing all over the place and doing amazing circus tricks on the drums. Jeff told Jim that his dad and brothers were always telling him he played too busy.

Then Jim recalled how a couple of years later, he heard the *Silk Degrees* record and the maturation of Jeff's playing—the grooves, the feel—was amazing. It's tough for a guy to put a leash on the chops. It took me a long time, and I still don't really have it.

That conversation with Jim made me go back and listen to that record, and "Lido Shuffle" was such a great performance. It doesn't sound like a kid in his early twenties playing. The drums sound so classy, and you have to remember that this was before Pro Tools. No one was being hired to help make you sound perfect. It was pretty naked.

One of the reasons I have to pick that song is that shuffles are a bitch to make feel perfect, and Jeff was the king of them. He had soul, feel, and confidence. The other thing I want to say is that I met Jeff when I was twelve, and he was so supportive and cool. Friends of mine would run into him and they'd say they knew me, and Jeff would go on about me, and it would mean so much to me when I heard that. He made me feel really good.

Steve Ferrone

"Train In The Distance," a track on the 1983 Paul Simon record *Hearts And Bones,* has always been one of my favorites, for the simplicity of what is played and the atmosphere it creates. You can almost feel through the drums the power of the locomotive speeding through the night. It's relentless in its pressing urgency. It captures the moment—and with what? A bass drum, hi-hat, and a couple of cymbal touches. Just like Art Blakey used to powerfully drive a big band along with a ride cymbal and a hi-hat, Jeff achieved the same thing in this song.

I don't know if Jeff or Paul Simon had the idea to play that song in that fashion, or if it was just one of those things that happened by accident in the studio while running something down. It's something I would love to have asked Jeff. I do know that Jeff sank way into the pocket on this track and played the heck out of it. No filler, no seam—it just flows into the full groove like water into a glass.

I remember the first time I heard that track. Roy Halee played it for me in the studio; it wasn't even mixed yet. When Jeff started to ease the kit in at the end, Roy leaned over to me and said, "Here he goes!" And there he went! The whole of Jeff's track gets summed up for me in the lyric: "Everybody loves the sound of a train in the distance. Everybody thinks it's true."

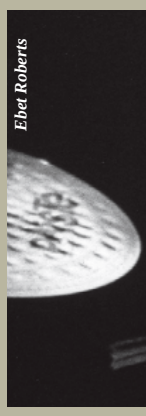
Tris Imboden

One of my all-time favorite tracks of Jeff's is the title track from Steely Dan's *Gaucho.* I remember hearing the album for the first time, while scanning the credits. I had seen both Rick Marotta and Steve Gadd's names, but I hadn't noticed Jeff's. I, like everyone else, was already a huge Steely Dan fan and well aware of Jeff's involvement over the years with them. As a matter of fact, I actually got to see Jeff with the band live in a rare appearance playing double drums with the original drummer, Jim Hodder.

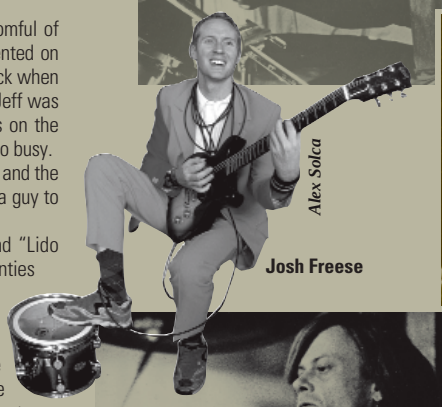
Anyway, when the track "Gaucho" started to play, I thought I'd scream because it felt so good. The placement of the snare—such a laid-back feeling, yet right in that sweet spot. I thought for sure, after having glimpsed Marotta and Gadd's names, that it was one of those two wizards of time and taste. The more I listened to it, though, I thought I detected some of those telltale Jeffisms. The sound and feel of the ruffs he plays on the snare, his dynamics when he hits the crash cymbal, that indelible Porcaro half-time feel. Every note is in its proper place, every fill so musical and complementary to the lyrics and the song.

Jeff accomplished this absolutely perfect performance without ever sounding "clinical." Revisiting this track after all these years, it still affects me the same way. Without a doubt, a sterling example of the genius of Jeff Porcaro.

Vinnie Colaiuta



Steve Ferrone



Josh Freese

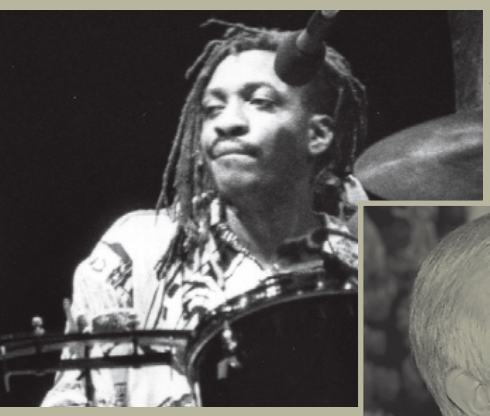
Gregg Bissonette

Tris Imboden

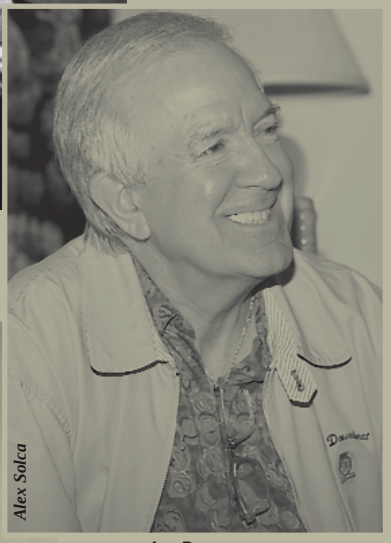
Gregg Bissonette

I remember the first time I heard "Rosanna" on the radio. I was driving to go hear Vinnie Colaiuta's band at the Flying Jib in Encino, and the song had just come out that day. Everybody was playing it. I remember getting to the club and the band was setting up, and percussionist Michael Fisher started playing his congas to that kind of shuffle and said, "How about that new Toto tune!" Everybody in the club—which was always packed with musicians—was talking about Jeff's feel and the shuffle. When I was a kid growing up, it was, "Hey, can you play 'In A Gadda Da Vida?'" But it became, "Hey, can you play 'Rosanna?'" "I don't think so, man, can you?" "I don't think so." That feel!

In '94, Simon Phillips called and asked me to sub for Toto in Europe. As soon as I went



Steve Jordan



Alex Solca

Joe Porcaro

Curt Bisquera

Jim Keltner

into the intro of that tune, the whole arena went to their feet and freaked out. It was a worldwide groove that people recognized! The trickiest thing about playing that song live was that B section where it goes, "Much quieter here since you went away," that finger snap part. Jeff had this ability to pull it back ever so slightly and put it in this whole other place. I remember I called it the B section, but Mike Porcaro always called it the church section. "We're going to church on this part." That's how Jeff would think of it.

Curt Bisquera

Al Jarreau's "Mornin'" [from 1983's *Jarreau*] has always been one of my favorite Jeff tracks. For anyone who was into listening to Jeff Porcaro, that song had all of his Jeffisms—all the fills, the feel, the laid-back groove. It was a mid-tempo shuffle, which he was the king of. When you hear Jeff playing with Abe Laboriel Sr. it's just a celebration of groove.

I recently got a call from Abe to play with Al Jarreau with the Los Angeles Choir, so I had to go pick up some Al Jarreau discs to brush up on what I'd be playing. My wife, Danielle, and I went to Barnes & Noble to pick up *Jarreau*. On the way back, we were on the freeway, and I put it in and went to "Mornin'," and that drum fill came in and we both just started bawling. It was just so powerful—the feel and attitude of the song. We had missed that drumming and that feel for so long. We were crying and laughing at the same time, going, "*Listen* to this."

Steve Jordan

I think one of Jeff's more memorable performances was on "Lowdown," by Boz Scaggs, for several reasons. Number one, the success of the track itself, and number two, you can hear the sheer excitement, ebullience, and spontaneity of the performance. It sums Jeff up in the things that were important to him as a player: making sure that groove was there. It also displays his sophistication. You don't really notice that he overdubbed the 16th notes on the hi-hat at first, but when you really listen to it, you hear he played 8th notes first.

One of the greatest things about the track is that when the drums come in, you know it's a hit. This is a sign of a great recording, as far as I'm concerned: When the listener is hooked by the second or third bar before the vocal even comes in, you know you have a hit. Those drums start off, and then Hungate comes in with the bass, and way before Boz Scaggs sings a note, you had a smash. And that was Jeff.

Joe Porcaro

My favorite time listening to Jeff was when he played live. I remember going to a Toto concert at the Ventura Theater, and they had such a groove going. Some of my favorite recordings are on Boz Scaggs' *Silk Degrees,* because of Jeff's groove. Even though it was on top a little bit, it was just dancing. He had such a good feel on "Lowdown." He did a track with Randy Crawford, a ballad that was so laid back. To be able to keep a groove that far back in the pocket knocked me out.

We did a recording together—*James Newton-Howard And Friends*—that was recorded live at the MGM soundstage. I played percussion and Jeff was on drums, and it gave me a chance to see him under some pretty high pressure. Bill Schnee was producing, and there was this traffic light signal where the red light would mean that nothing should be happening, the yellow light would mean we should get ready, and when the green light came on, Jeff had to silently count off the tempo. We all had to watch his lips. He motioned with the sticks in midair, but never clicked them together.

The wild thing about that session was, we would record a tune, and then we had fifteen seconds to change the music to be ready for the next one. We had to do one whole album side without stopping! Every tune had a different feel and a different groove, and Jeff amazed me. I was very proud of his being able to handle something like that.

I also have to say that Jeff was very proud that Miles Davis wanted one of his works of art. That came about because Michael Jackson had recorded "Human Nature" by Steve Porcaro, and Miles heard it and wanted to record it. A year later, Miles' producer called Steve to see if he had any more tunes, so he sent him a tape. The next week, Steve and Miles went over to Jeff's house, where he had a studio, to record two tunes.

While Miles was at the studio, he saw a picture on the wall that Jeff had drawn of a captain with a long curled tongue and an olive at the end of it—you know Jeff. Well, Miles freaked over the picture and said he had to have it. Jeff said, "You're an artist. If you give me a picture of yours, you can have it." Miles had some art stuff in his briefcase, and he drew a picture of five women in gorgeous gowns in the most beautiful colors you ever saw—and he scratched his name on it. In fact, Miles was in such a good mood, they asked him if he would overdub on a ballad that Toto was recording at the time.

There are so many stories about Jeff that have circulated in the drum industry—some true, some exaggerated, but all told with complete reverence and respect. Jeff was a large presence who, before he settled down in his marriage, was somewhat of a lady's man. So nearly all his friends have non-publishable stories to tell. But in order to paint an accurate picture of this man who has become somewhat of a legend, some of them must be told.

For instance, producer/engineer Elliot Scheiner told me about wanting Jeff to play on an album he was producing for songwriter Randy Goodrum. But Jeff didn't want to go to New York for ten days. Scheiner was able to lure Jeff to do the record with a promise of the presence of a female production assistant Scheiner knew he liked. Jeff once told me he always played better with a pretty girl in the room. I think that's true for most male drummers, but Jeff was just honest enough to say it. To say that Jeff was a character is an understatement.

Jim Keltner

There are so many songs that Jeff helped bring to life, and one of my favorites is "New York Minute" by Don Henley [*End Of The Innocence*]. I played on an earlier version of the song that was a bit more aggressive, with a lot of big tom sounds. But they later changed the arrangement and re-cut it with Jeff. When I heard it on the radio, it just knocked me out. It was that beautiful feel, very simple with the brushes in the verse and a nice, smooth switch to the sticks for the chorus, all done with the absolute sultriness he became famous for in his very short but amazing life. Jeff was one of the great old souls of his time.

●

Cohorts And Coworkers On Jeff

Randy Bachman

Steve Lukather says that a day doesn't go by that he doesn't think about Jeff Porcaro. "The thing about Jeff was how charismatic he was," Toto's guitarist insists. "He wasn't just a drummer. That's a given. But he was one of the best we've ever had. The pocket was so deep you just could not help but fall into it. He led Toto. Where Jeff put it, that's where it should be.

"It wasn't just a guy playing a groove," Lukather continues. "There was something intangible in his playing that you can't put into words. It was a presence, an aura if you will. When he walked into a room, it lit up—always. He was a magical person. He was an old soul that everyone wanted to be near. He was one of the most natural musicians I ever knew in my life. It was effortless for him and he was modest to a fault.

"Jeff and I were always at the rehearsals early," Steve says. "He was always there before me. I'd stand at the door and listen to him wailing in there, with unbelievable chops. I'd open the door and say, 'Why the hell won't you do that in front of people?' He'd laugh and say, 'It's all bullshit, man, it's all bullshit.' I'd say, 'No, it's not, no one has ever heard you play like that.' It was all this Buddy Rich and Vinnie stuff. He didn't want to show off, but when he'd hear something that was different, he'd want to know it.

"I remember when Gadd did the first Stuff record, Jeff and I were digging it at Jeff's house. I went back the next day, and he was still playing it, totally figuring it out. Any musician worth their weight in gold has that eternal quest. You never wake up one day and go, 'Okay, now I know everything.' You'll go to your grave trying to find the new note or the new groove.

"Jeff was a great teacher for me, too. I considered being around him like being around a master. He took me under his wing. I don't know why I was lucky enough to be that guy—well, *one* of those guys. He took a lot of people under his wing. He helped so many cats without guys even knowing it. He was always one to rave about someone else. He was the big brother I never had.

"We were the last generation of live rhythm-section dates. We had to play together to get a take, instead of this one-guy-at-a-time, fix it, fix it, fix it thing that they do today. And they used to call *us* slick and soulless. We sat in a room until we got a take. Nobody does that anymore. People are mystified by the concept.

"'Rosanna' was ridiculous when I first heard it. We were sitting, getting ready to cut the track. Paich started playing on the piano—we never rehearsed, we'd just show up at a session and go, 'What are we gonna do today?' And whoever had a tune, we'd play it. Paich started playing, and Jeff started playing that groove—and we all went crazy. He said it was a take-off on John Bonham and Bernard Purdie.

"When you hear Jeff on the radio, you know it's him. He had an identity and his own unique style. Let's just face it, Jeff was the man. He was an artist as well—a painter and a sculptor. I have a couple of caricatures that he did of me that are pretty intense. There are some of Paich that are just jaw-droppingly funny. Jeff would sit in the studio while we were overdubbing and just draw cartoons of everybody.

"I miss him. I miss all the good times. Besides the music, I miss the man. Whenever I was in trouble or needed advice, he was the first phone call. Jeff must have gotten a lot of those phone calls, because everybody looked up to him. Everybody loved him. He didn't have any enemies. Even cats he took work from loved him. No one could argue with the fact that Jeff was the man. Man, I can't believe it's been ten years."

Legendary engineer/producer **Elliot Scheiner** has strong feelings for Jeff as well. "His musicianship was phenomenal. He always made you sound good. The drums could sound like the raggiest, most terrible instrument, but with Jeff playing them it was definitely okay. He was always there early, tuning the drums, especially on Steely Dan dates. It just had to be perfect for him.

"In the '70s," Scheiner continues, "I used to have to go in and tune drums myself for most of the players. I'd come in half an hour before everybody else and tune the drums. Jeff was always early. Sometimes he'd argue—occasionally Steely would do a shuffle and he would say, 'I can't play shuffles. I just don't do shuffles. Get Purdie, he does shuffles.' But when he would play a shuffle, it would be so unbelievable. He was a pleasure to watch play."

Producer **Kyle Lehning** got a huge dose of Jeff's sense of humor and attitude in the late '70s. Lehning was recording his first album in LA at the Record Plant with an artist named Marie Cain. "I think it was Lee Sklar, Jai Winding, Richie Zito, and my first time working with Jeff. At one point, I pushed the talkback down and said, 'Hey Jeff, can you do a tom fill into the bridge, a bloom-da-bloom-da-bloom kind of thing?' I didn't get a yes or a no from him. Then we started the song from the top and they got through the first verse, the first chorus, the second verse, and the second chorus, and it was sounding just fine. Then when they were coming out of the second chorus and getting ready to hit the bridge, I looked out at Jeffrey, and he was playing the kit with one hand while reaching into his stick bag, which was hanging off of his floor tom. He grabbed this huge wad of drumsticks in his right hand and lifted them over the top of his head. Just before the bridge, where I had asked him to play that fill, he dropped *all* of those drumsticks over his toms. Of course, everybody stopped and laughed. It was, 'Okay, that's funny.'

"We took it from the top again and when we got to that same spot before the bridge, Jeff reached into his stick bag for another wad of drumsticks and dropped them all over the toms," Lehning continues. "At that point, I had to make a very quick decision, which came to me in a flash. It was, 'Hey, he's Jeff Porcaro. I'm never going to tell him how to play another fill again.' I stopped and said, 'I'll tell you what, Jeffrey. I'll make you a deal: You don't do that again, and I won't tell you how to play tom fills.' And he said, 'Fair enough.' And the next take, of course, was perfect."

Careful not to totally excuse Porcaro's behavior, Lehning says, "He was being an ass, but he was really young. And you know what? I used him many times after that, and we had a great time and he played on some wonderful records. He could be quite a character, though. No question about it."

Jeff's long-time drumtech **Paul Jamieson**'s reflections are of both the drummer and the man, since he spent so much time with both. Paul's thoughts of Jeff the man are particularly moving. "When I think about him, I think about all of the times together. We were good bros—going to the Superbowl together, watching Raider games—we'd gamble on the stuff. I remember him lending me $10,000 so I could buy my home. I also remember when we were in Miami doing a Bee Gees record and he sent me to get a rental car. I got a Mustang convertible with a four-speed. When we left the studio that night, he told me to take the car back and get an automatic because he couldn't drive a stick shift, which I knew. I told him I was going to teach him. We ended up in a parking lot of a shopping center, and after stalling the car out about twenty times, he got pissed off and started yelling at me to take the thing back. And what this story illustrates is that, as coordinated and talented as he was, this was just one thing he could not do. It proves he was a real guy."

family, friends

music mentor

jeff porcaro

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Jeff Porcaro

continued from page 71

In our following interview, Jeff talked about "Your Gold Teeth II" (Steely Dan, *Katy Lied*): "It was written in 6/8, 3/8, and 9/8; that's the way the bar phrases were written for us. It was Chuck Rainey, me, and Michael Omartian for the basic tracking session. We ran it down once, and all of us thought, 'Wow, this is going to be unbelievable,' especially me, because I was twenty-one and I wasn't the most experienced bebop player.

"When I heard 'Gold Teeth II,' the first reaction in my nervous little body was, 'I'm the wrong guy, I shouldn't be here,' knowing the kind of tune it was and knowing those guys real well. They weren't really aware of a lot of drummers back then, but they were aware of Jim Gordon, and I thought Gordon could do a better job playing it. He was more experienced at getting a better feel. I was very nervous about it.

"Fagen did the perfect thing. We lived near each other, and he got me to hang out and listen to Charlie Mingus with him. He gave me some Mingus album with Dannie Richmond on drums, and he said, 'Listen to this for two days before coming to the studio.' So I listened to Dannie Richmond and tried to copy a couple of things he was doing and some things I had heard my dad play. And there *was* this Mingus vibe to the rhythm of the song. I remember that everybody in the studio had such a hard time that, every night, after recording other songs, before we'd leave we'd play 'Gold Teeth II' once. I think it was about the seventh night of a four-week tracking date when we got the track."

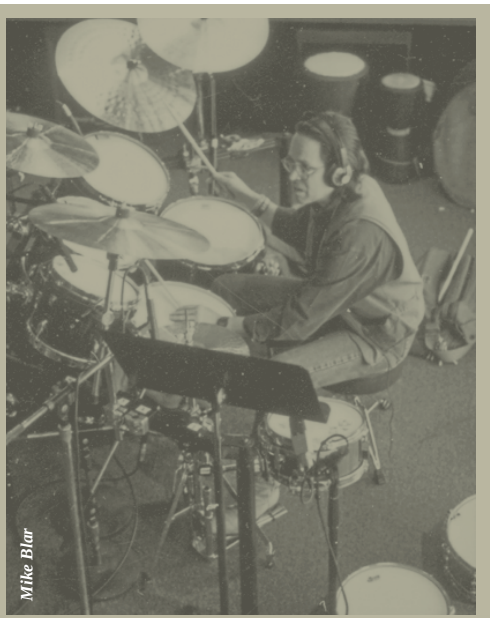
In that same interview, I asked Jeff to talk about some of my favorite tracks. "Lowdown" (Boz Scaggs, *Silk Degrees*): "'Lowdown' is from a David Paich composition that he wrote for the band that would become Toto. David and I had done some demos in late '75 and early '76. There was this one song that, when we got to the fade, we snapped into a completely different groove. That groove was bass drum on 1, the last 16th note of the second beat, and the third beat, straight 16th notes on the hi-hat, and snare drum on 2 and 4. Boz Scaggs heard the song and said he wanted to do it, but Paich said no, it was going to be for a group we were going to have one day. But he *would* give him the fade. So Paich took the fade and wrote 'Lowdown' for Boz. Boz wrote lyrics and melody and stuff, and we went into the studio.

"When we cut 'Lowdown,' it was 1976 and there was an Earth, Wind & Fire album out that I had been listening to over and over. Instead of 16ths, one of the tunes had a similar groove except it was quarter notes on the hi-hat. We wanted to get that kind of Earth, Wind & Fire medium dance-groove rhythm. But instead of doing quarter notes, I did 8th notes, so if you take the figure I described to you and substitute 8th notes on the hi-hat, and every two bars or so open the hi-hat on the last 8th note of the fourth beat, that's it.

"We cut it that way, but the producer said, 'Gee, do you want to try adding 16th notes?' because disco was starting to come in around '76. I wasn't the keenest guy on disco and said, 'Naw, you don't want to do that, man. You don't want to ruin the groove.' He said, 'Just try it,' so I overdubbed the hi-hat, which they put on the opposite side of the stereo mix. While I was overdubbing the simple 16ths, I started

Master Drums

Long-Time Tech Paul Jamieson On Jeff's Kit


Mike Blair

Paul Jamieson, who now runs Paul Jamieson Studio Rentals, worked with Jeff from 1975 through 1988. He was Jeff's drum tech and confidante. Although Jeff always shied away from talking about equipment in his interviews, Jamieson says he definitely had certain preferences and pet peeves. Through the course of time, Jeff's setup changed.

"When I first met him," Jamieson recalls, "he was recording Boz Scaggs' *Silk Degrees* and he had a standard Ludwig kit—a 14x22 bass drum, 8x12 and 9x13 rack toms, and a 16x16 floor tom.

"When we did the Toto demos," Paul continues, "which was almost at the same time, he used a Slingerland kit—a 14x26 bass drum, a 12x15 rack, and an 18x20 floor tom—huge drums. That was a more open-room Zeppelin type thing. Bonham was one of Jeff's favorite drummers, so we were going for that kind of sound.

"When we recorded the first Toto album at Studio 55, he used one of my Gretsch drumsets, which were the same sizes as the Ludwig kit. He played Gretsch drums in the studio from that minute on. From there, I built him a Gretsch kit that he used on Boz's tours.

"The first time we went to Japan, Yamaha gave us some equipment that Jeff used for a while. And then on the second tour to Japan, he made a deal with Pearl. Along with the endorsement came our deal with the drum rack that he and I came up with. Jeff played Pearl live, but on recordings you're listening to Gretsch drums.

"When Gretsch had their hundred-year anniversary, they built a Bicentennial-edition drumset, which I got for Jeff. It was made of Carpathian elm, which is what they make Rolls Royce dashboards out of—with gold parts. To this day, it's the most beautiful drumset I've ever seen. I got Jeff a couple of Gretsch sets, and he used those until he died.

"As far as snare drums, there were five I built for him, plus custom Radio Kings and a 6½x14 '40s Gretsch maple snare drum that I customized for him. Those were his main drums, even though toward the end he ended up with twenty to thirty snare drums—Black Beauties, a Brady, a Solid, and all the stuff Pearl and Yamaha had given him.

"As for drumheads, Jeff liked them when they were worn in a little bit. I remember him telling me, if he could buy a brand-new head broken in, that would be perfect.

Regarding Jeff's cymbal selection over the years, Paul says, "Jeff used Zildjian up until about 1984, when Rich Mangicaro took over the A&R department at Paiste cymbals. Rich was a personal friend of the Porcaro family and bent over backwards to take care of Jeff, Joe, and Emil Richards. Jeff preferred a medium to medium-thin cymbal, nothing too heavy. He also liked big crashes that had a good amount of sustain. Traditionally on a session he would have me bring a ride, two to three crashes, and a hi-hat, which is pretty much what he used for Toto as well. His philosophy was less is more.

"Jeff was very picky about his sticks," Paul continues. "Back then they were inconsistent as far as the density is concerned. When I would buy the sticks, I would roll them to make sure they weren't warped, and even though I would have a hundred sticks that I thought were close to perfect and straight, he would pick one up, start playing, throw it, grab another, throw it, and continue to do it four or five times until he found a pair he liked. He would hand them to me and say, 'Here, *this* is what I want.' To me, one didn't feel any different from the other. But to him, it was major."

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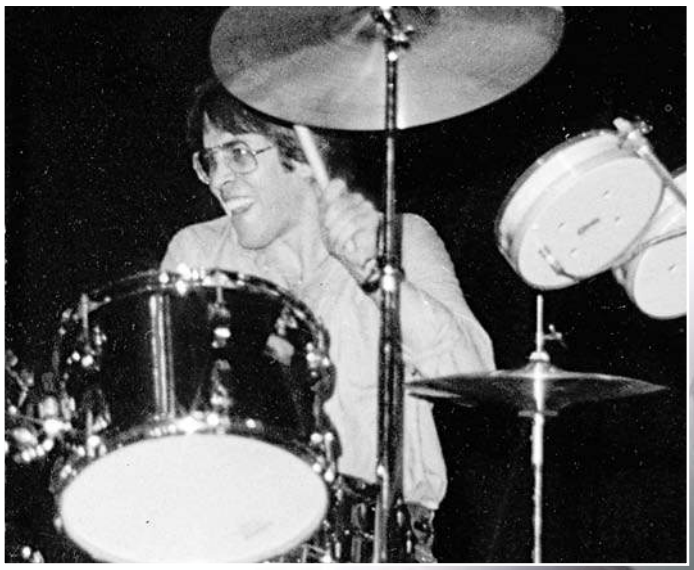
doing some accents and answering my hi-hat stuff, and it got to be a lot of fun."

"Hold The Line" (Toto, *Toto*): "That was me trying to play like Sly Stone's original drummer, Greg Errico, who played drums on 'Hot Fun In The Summertime.' The hi-hat is doing triplets, the snare drum is playing 2 and 4 backbeats, and the bass drum is on 1 and the '&' of 2. That 8th note on the second beat is an 8th-note-triplet feel, but pushed.

"Georgie Porgy" (Toto, *Toto*): "When it comes to that groove, my biggest influences were Paul Humphrey, Ed Greene, Earl Palmer, and the godfather of that 16th-note groove, James Gadson. That 'Georgie Porgy' groove I owe to them. It's the same groove on 'Lowdown,' just a different lift of it maybe, a different tempo. I stole all those grooves from those guys, but I may lay the beat just a little bit differently, depending on the song."



"Africa" (Toto, *Toto IV*): "I was about eleven when the New York World's Fair took place, and I went to the African pavilion with my family. I saw the real thing; I don't know what tribe, but there were these drummers playing, and my mind was blown. The thing that blew my mind was that everybody was playing one part. As a little kid in Connecticut, I would see these Puerto Rican and Cuban cats jamming in the park. It was the first time I witnessed somebody playing one beat and not straying from it, like a religious experience, where it gets loud and everyone goes into a trance. I've always dug those kind of orchestras, whether it's a band or all drummers. But I just love a bunch of guys saying one thing. That's why I loved marching band.

"So when we were doing 'Africa,' I set up a bass drum, snare drum,

Rick Malkin

and hi-hat, and Lenny Castro set up right in front of me with a conga. We looked at each other and just started playing the basic groove—the bass drum on 1, the '&' of 2, and 3. The backbeat is on 3, so it's a half-time feel, and it's 16th notes on the hi-hat. Lenny started playing a conga pattern. We played for five minutes on tape, no click, no nothing. We just played. And I was singing the bass line for 'Africa' in my mind, so we had a relative tempo.

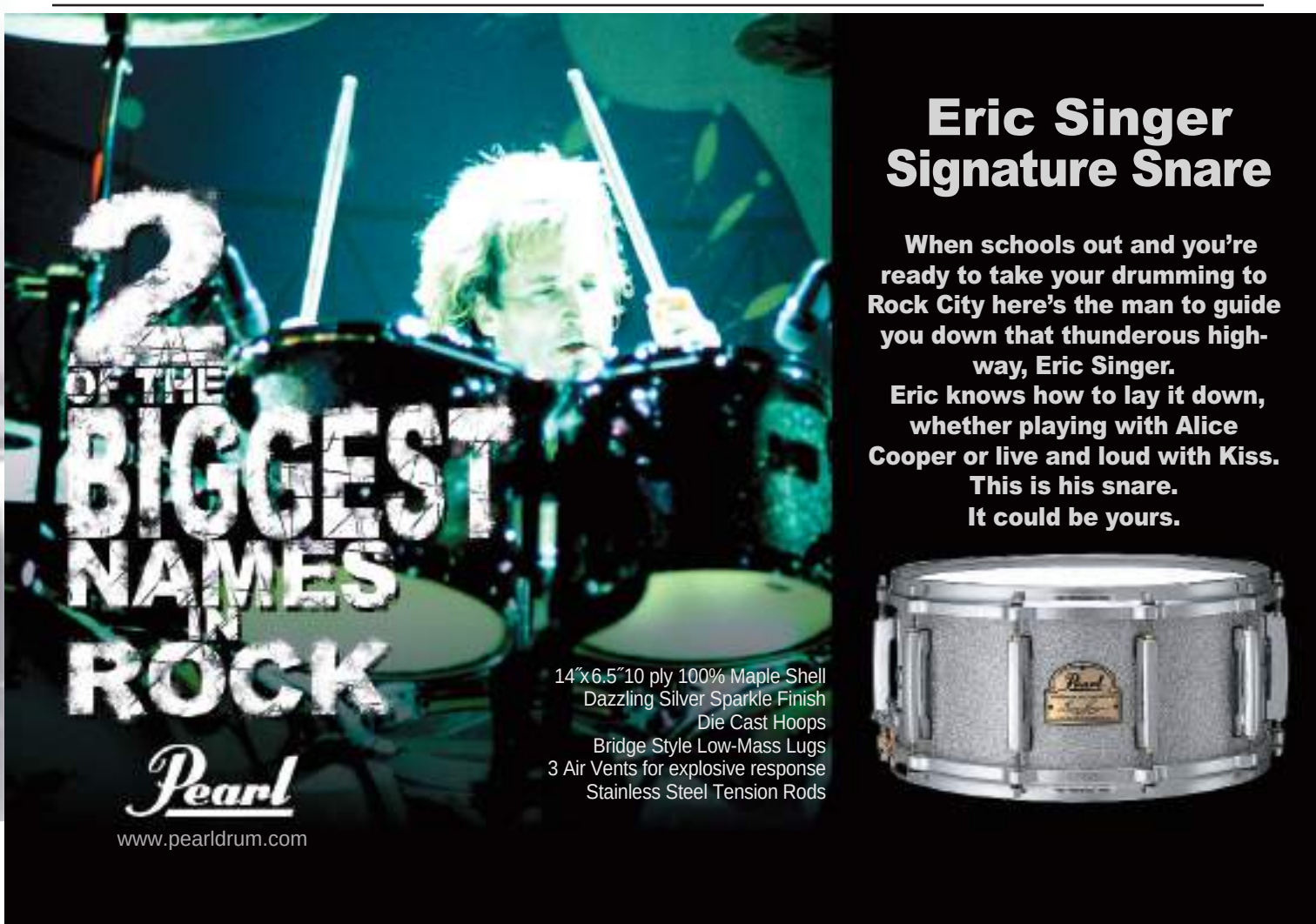
"Then Lenny and I went into the booth and listened back to the five minutes of the same boring pattern. We picked out the best two bars that we thought were grooving and marked them on the tape. Then we made another mark four bars before. Lenny and I went back out; I had a cowbell, Lenny had a shaker. They gave us two new tracks and then gave us the cue when they saw the first mark go by. Lenny and I started playing to get into the groove, so by the time that fifth bar came—which was the first bar of the two bars we marked as the cool bars we liked—we were locked, and we overdubbed shaker and cowbell.

"So at that point we had bass drum, snare drum, hi-hat, two congas, a cowbell, and a shaker. We went back in, cut the tape, and made a one-bar loop that went 'round and 'round and 'round. Of course, the Linn machine was available to us, and maybe it would have only taken two minutes to program what we had played into the Linn. But a Linn machine doesn't feel like that! So we had an analog groove.

"We took that tape, transferred it onto another 24-track for six minutes, and David Paich and I went out in the studio. The song started, and I was sitting there with a complete drumset, and Paich was playing. When he got to the fill before the chorus, I started playing, and when the verse or the intro came back, I stopped. Then we had piano and drums on tape.

"You have to realize that there are some odd bars in 'Africa,' so when you have a one-bar loop going, all of a sudden, sometimes Lenny's figure would turn around. So Lenny went in and played the song again, but this time he changed his pattern a little for the turn-arounds, the fills, the bridge, and the solo. We kept his original part and the new one. Then we had to do bongos, jingle sticks, and big shakers doing quarter notes, maybe stacking two tracks of sleigh bells, two tracks of big jingle sticks, and two tracks of tambourines all down to one track. I was trying to get the sounds I would hear Milt Holland or Emil Richards play, or the sounds I would hear in a *National Geographic* special, or the ones I heard at the New York World's Fair."

"Good For You" (Toto, *Toto IV*). Regarding that great drum break in the middle of the song, Jeff said, "It's just a weird-feeling fill—that's all it is. I can't recall what it is. The reason it's a weird-feeling fill is because it was one of those spontaneous things; what you hear on that record is the first time I ever played it. I tried to do something else and failed, yet something came out that was sort of in time. If you listen to it, that fill is rushing. There are live tapes where the fill was even hipper because it laid where it was supposed to. Sometimes something good comes from an accident or going for something."



"I Won't Hold You Back" (Toto, *Toto IV*) and "Anna" (Toto, *The Seventh One*). I asked Jeff to specifically address his ballad approach: "My ballad playing is me emulating Jim Keltner. All I think about is Jim Keltner, Jim Keltner, Jim Keltner. Since I was sixteen years old, I've had a vivid picture of Jim sitting at a set of drums on my right. I think of relaxing the groove so that there's space. I like space in ballads. And sometimes I like those long, open fills I stole from Ringo Starr. Drummers have to be sensitive to song dynamics. Toto's ballads happen to give you a lot of dynamics. You can get out there and still stay open."

"Forever Man" (Eric Clapton, *Behind The Sun*): "'Forever Man' is the kind of drumming I stole from Jim Gordon and Jim Keltner. It's a very bad example of what you'd hear on those Tulsa rock 'n' roll–type tracks, like the Leon Russell or Delaney & Bonnie-type grooves Gordon, Keltner, and Chuck Blackwell would play."

"Dirty Laundry" (Don Henley, *I Can't Stand Still*): "'Dirty Laundry' is just me laying it. It was an electronic track, meaning it was sequenced; that Farfisa organ part is a sequence going down, so I was just bashing. I played 1 on the bass drum and 2 and 4 on the snare drum. I'm just pounding. If you took the drums out and listened to it, there would be nothing else you could play except that groove. Nothing else fits. The backbeat was obviously as far back as I could lay the sucker, and I hit as hard as I could."

By now, you can see that Porcaro was quick to credit other drummers for his work. He always acknowledged that the combination of his influences created his own style. "I used to practice in junior high," Jeff recalled in 1982, "and every day after school I'd go into the den, put on headphones, and play to 'Boogaloo Down Broadway.' The drums were cool on that and I used to dig that feel. I'd play with all the Beatles records, all the Hendrix records, and that's where I think I got a lot of the versatility as far as being able to play authentically.

"If a drummer takes something Bernard Purdie played on and sits for two weeks with the 'phones so he can still hear Bernard, but he's also playing along where he doesn't hear himself flamming with him or rushing—just grooving with the tune—the next time he goes to play a tune that's similar, he might start playing that feel. I can't tell you how many tunes I've played where I've ripped off the same thing Jim Gordon used on 'Charlie Freak' on *Pretzel Logic*. The beat I used on 'Lido Shuffle' is the same thing Gordon did except at twice the tempo. There's no originality there.

"I do think it's bad to clone yourself after someone, although I actually cloned myself after Jim Keltner when I was seventeen. I even thought it was cool to wear a vest like him. But a drummer's own style comes from eventually being on his own. After a while the accumulation of all the guys you copy becomes your own thing—hopefully."

Back in Connecticut, where he was born, Jeff's father, Joe, taught his son drums from age eight to eleven. Aside from a couple of private instructors and those in school, from there Jeff taught himself, either playing with records or with bands. When I asked him if he

had worked on his hi-hat technique as a kid, he answered, "No. It was probably the last instrument to come into my repertoire of drum instruments. If it had been important to me or I had studied the hi-hat or paid special attention to it in general, it would have been easier.

"This year [1988], I'm finally comfortable playing quarter notes on the hi-hat through a whole tune or a whole groove. See, I was never taught that way, so my foot would stay still. I was taught to chick the hi-hat on 2 and 4 from old bebop records, and everything else involved playing the hi-hat closed or a little bit open.

"I used to listen to all those Sly Stone records with Greg Errico. I loved his hi-hat stuff, and the guy who took over for him, Andy Newmark. I stole a lot of hi-hat stuff from those two guys, plus David Garibaldi and Bernard Purdie. I thought as much about the hi-hat as I did bass drum and snare drum stuff. I'm talking about during this period when I was really picking up stuff. Pre-disco R&B stuff had a lot of hi-hat happening. Funk had a lot of nice hi-hat stuff going on, like David Garibaldi and The Tower Of Power stuff.

"What I never realized, or never had the ears to hear, was that Bernard always kept quarter notes, 8th notes, or even 16th notes going on the hi-hat with his foot—sometimes loud or sometimes real tight and short—while he was playing 8ths, 16ths, or whatever on top. This didn't become obvious to me until I got out into the real drum world and saw a lot more drummers playing. And when I would try to do that…I'm not the most ambidextrous guy, so coordination with my feet would be real funny. John Guerin does stuff with his foot that blows my mind. Tony Williams would blow my mind, so then I'd go, 'Gee, Jeff, you've got to learn at least how to play quarter notes. Oh yeah, this helps my time if I keep quarter notes going while I'm filling. Good idea, Jeff.'"

The Porcaro family moved to California in 1966, and by the early '70s, Jeff had been discovered. A chance meeting with bass player David Hungate at Leon Russell's house one night started the ball rolling. Hungate recommended him for the Sonny & Cher gig, and in May, 1972, right before his high school graduation, Jeff left school to go on the road with them, ultimately leading to his playing on the last two seasons of their television series.

One night, at the end of '73, Jeff was playing a small LA jazz club, Dantes, when Donald Fagen and Walter Becker happened to stroll in. They immediately approached him for Steely Dan. It was after his first tour with them and the *Katy Lied* album that Jeff began to get a slew of session calls. He and his comrades like David Paich and David Hungate represented a new era of studio players—young cats who had a rock 'n' roll attitude, but could read as well. Jeff, though, always hated how people perceived the session musician.

"I was never meant to be a legitimate studio drummer," he claimed in 1982, "and I get irked when people say 'studio drummer.' Hey, I just walked in and played and had fun. But I always hated the politics and how you're supposed to perform and act as a studio person. I don't have a book and I don't go to the phone and call

my answering service and say, 'What's next?'

"A helpful hint for anybody doing sessions," offered Jeff during our first interview, "really the number-one rule, is don't think about what you're going to do, or how people in the studio are going to look over and dig that you're doing a good job. Try to be completely aware of the song. Try to hear the song as many times as possible, and play for the song—not for yourself or for the contractor or for whomever else. Show up early, work with the engineer to tune your drums, and if you can, look at the stuff ahead of time so you can woodshed in case it's something that's hard for you to do. Be polite, and don't stay on the phone too long. Don't do any dope, not because dope is bad, but because certain drugs affect some people's time, concentration, or attitude."

During our 1988 interview, Jeff told *MD* the story of a difficult session with Ricky Lee Jones that had circulated around town. The detailed account of that session is a perfect illustration of what a session musician must sometimes endure—and where to draw the line. "I was called to do the entire Ricky Lee Jones *Pirates* album. On her first album, I got called in to replace a certain famous drummer's drum part. I forgot the name of the song, but it was a ballad and I played brushes. She remembered that, so she wanted me to do her whole next album. The producers were Russ Titelman and Lenny Waronker, and I got a tape of the demos a month before the sessions.

"I went to the session and was happy to see such great players. There's Chuck Rainey on bass, Dean Parks on guitar, Russell Ferrante on piano, Lenny Castro on percussion, and Ricky Lee Jones playing piano and singing. The drums were in an isolation booth with a big window going across, so I could see everybody in the main studio. I had my headphones on, and we started going over the first song.

"After the first pass of the tune, Ricky Lee said in the phones, 'Mr. Porcaro, I know you're known for keeping good time, but on these sessions, I can't have you do that. With my music, when I'm telling my story, I like things to speed up and slow down, and I like people to follow me.' When she said it, there was something in the tone of her voice that was weird, but that wasn't predominant in my mind. So the natural thing for me to say to Lee Herschberg, the engineer, was, 'Can I have more of Ricky's vocal and piano in my phones?'

"We start playing again, and I'm pretty good at listening to people and following. She stops halfway through and says, 'The time is too straight. You've got to loosen up a little bit. Did you notice on this one line that I'm speeding up? I need you to speed up with me.' I go, 'I'm sorry. Lee, can I have a little bit more of Ricky's vocal? Take my drums down in the phones just a little bit.'

"We start again from the top and we come to that same section and I hear her intentionally speeding up, it seems like, and emphasizing it. I'm following, and that's cool. She slows down again, and I thought I was slowing down, but she stops again and says, 'Can you hear me good? Try to get out of your….' I got the impression she was saying to get out of my 'perfect studio musician' routine and be an artist for her. When she said that, the blood rushed up to my

head, because I'm always nervous when I play for anybody, especially people who are critically acclaimed. So I got real nervous because I didn't want to be squaresville; I wanted to be hip. I looked out into the studio and all the guys in the band—who I've known for years—were looking at me with this look on their faces, and I thought, 'Wow, what's going on? This is real strange.' So we did it one more time, but it was so weird that Lenny Castro went into the control room and said something to Russ and Lenny like, 'Guys, what's going on? Call a break or something.'

"A break was called. Ricky was still at the piano and I was sitting at my drums going, 'What the hell?' I was staring at her. She wasn't looking at me, I was just looking over at this person hunched over the piano, now playing a different song. Lenny Castro came over to visit me, going, 'Man, something is weird.' I said to Lenny, 'She's messing with me.' I didn't want to go to Russ and cause a scene, but I told Lenny to tell them that they had better pay attention to what was going on—to call off the dogs—or I'd be skating. I'll take criticism, but I won't take abuse.

"So I was sitting down, and she's playing. She didn't have headphones on, but Chuck Rainey and I did, and we played along with her—and it's grooving. It's a shuffle, and Lenny and Russ hear it in the booth and go over the talkback, 'Ricky, put your phones on. Listen to *this*.' She put her phones on, still playing, and said, 'Yeah!' with a big smile on her face. 'Thank God,' I thought to myself. So Lenny and Russ said, 'Let's move away from that first thing and do this,' and I was like, 'Great!'

"So we started laying the track down, and I came up to this simple fill: triplets over one bar. It was written out on my music, and I played the fill. She stopped and said, 'You have to play harder.' I said, 'Okay,' with a smile, and we started again. I had brand new heads. I like to keep brand new Ambassadors on my drums, and my toms were sounding nice. I play the fill again. She stops, 'You've got to play *harder*.' Everybody looked at me. I said, 'Okay, let's do it again.' We started again, and one bar before the fill I hear her, louder than hell, in my phones, 'We're coming up to the fill! Remember to play hard!' So I whacked the shit out of my drums, as hard as I've ever hit anything in my life. While I was hitting them, she's screaming, '*Harder*!'

"I stopped. She stopped. I looked at my drums. My heads had dents in them; if I hit them lightly, they'd buzz, and I was pissed. Lenny Waronker said, 'Let's do it again.' We started again, and everybody was looking at me while they're playing. We come up to the fill, and she yells, '*Play hard*!' So I took my sticks like daggers and did the fill, except I stabbed holes through my tom-tom heads. I then landed on my snare drum, both sticks shaking. I then got up and picked up my gig bag. There's complete silence. I slid open the glass door, walked past her and down the hallway, got in my car, and drove home.

"Well, I got home, and the first call I get is from Lenny Castro. 'It's insane here. She's going to sue you. She's got all these musicians here and you split.' I said, 'Let her sue me. Nobody, but *nobody* talks to me that way.' If I was the wrong cat, the producers should have broken up the session. I would have been the first to say, 'Hey, you don't

have to give me two days' notice. Find somebody else. I'm the wrong drummer. I'm sorry, I wish I could have been a better drummer for you guys, but I did the best I could.' But they let a situation go on way too long for anybody, especially someone like me who worked for them before. I thought I deserved a little more respect.

"Ricky Lee never sued me and I didn't hear anything about it for a couple of years. Then last year I got a call from James Newton-Howard. He was producing Ricky Lee Jones' new album and said, 'You won't believe this, but she wants you to play on two songs.' I said, 'Does she know who I am?' What I really didn't know, but had wondered, was that maybe she had been going through some hard times, like we all go through, and I got messed with. Maybe we all handle our hard times differently. The way James Newton-Howard explained it over the phone was, 'Maybe she doesn't remember the situation too well.' I said, 'Whether she does or doesn't, I'd love to play with her. I hold no grudges. I know that you, knowing that whole story, won't let that happen. If I'm wrong, you'll just stop the session and do an overdub while you find a drummer for the next session.'

"So I got there. Ricky said, 'Hi Jeff, good to see you again. You seem to have lost weight.' Well, actually, I had gained thirty pounds from the last time she saw me, so for a second I thought, 'She's messing with me.' But I realized she was much more together than the last time I had seen her, and she looked gorgeous. The plan was to do one song a day; we were booked for six hours a day for two days. We did the first song in two takes. 'Thank you, see you guys tomorrow.' The second song took only three takes. At the end of three takes, in front of the whole band, including people who had been there when I had stabbed my drums with the sticks, she said, 'Jeff, I really have to tell you this. No drummer has ever played so great for me, listened to my music so closely, understood what I'm saying with my lyrics, and has followed me as well as you. I just want to thank you for the good tracks.' I almost broke up laughing because I had played no differently for her the year before."

There isn't any kind of situation Jeff didn't have to deal with during his many years working in the studio—difficult artists, unclear producers, unsavory situations. But for every tough day, Jeff could tell you about twenty good ones. No matter what, Jeff loved what he did. He summed up his feelings in the following quote:

"I love playing," he said. "I get up early in the morning on days I have free, and somebody will call and ask if I'll play. I'll play for free for somebody. I'll play anytime anybody calls me to play, because I like playing. At least I know that at the end of the year I can say, 'God, even if only *I* know, I've accomplished a lot of shit. I've played a lot of music and I've used my full potential. Whatever gift God gave me for whatever reasons, I've used it to its full potential.' And people call and ask if I'll play on their albums. Even when I'm tired or sick, if they say, 'Will you please play? We'd love for you to play,' then it's my privilege to play."

It remains us, the public, who are privileged to hear the great body of work Jeff Porcaro left behind.

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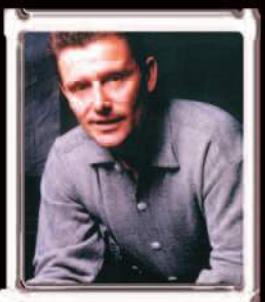

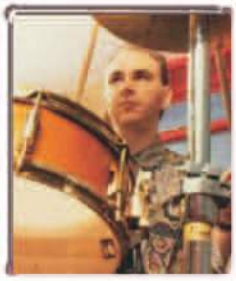

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(Natalie Imbruglia)

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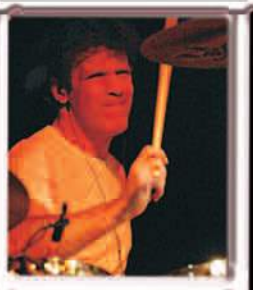
(Elton John)

Derrick McKenzie
(Jamiroquai)

Neal Wilkinson
(independent)



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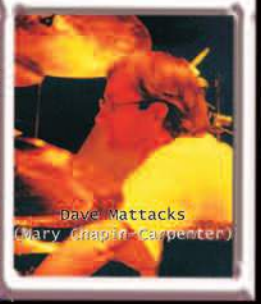

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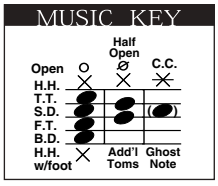
Jeff Porcaro

Style & Analysis

by Ed Breckenfeld



From the mid-'70s to his death in 1992, Jeff Porcaro was one of the most sought-after studio drummers in America. After early successes with Steely Dan and Boz Scaggs opened the door, the buzz about Jeff grew swiftly, and it seemed that everyone wanted to utilize his talents. Jeff responded to high-pressure recording sessions with a relaxed yet intense groove and an intangible ability to make a song feel right.

Though always considering himself a rock drummer, Jeff could handle just about anything you could throw at him (as we'll see in the following examples). Like all great drummers, his playing served the song and made everyone around him sound better. Jeff Porcaro was truly a *musician's* drummer.

I was lucky enough to see Jeff on tour with Steely Dan in 1974. I remember thinking, Look at this kid, not much older than me (he was twenty at the time), just rippin' it up! Porcaro brought great energy and youthful enthusiasm to the stage, but also a sense of taste and control way beyond his years.

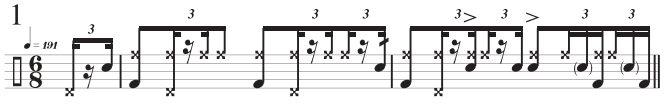
Along with his presence in the hit band Toto, Jeff's twenty years of top session work brought him a high profile. His personal sound and style became more recognizable than most session drummers'. Jeff always seemed to come up with a unique groove or fill that identified the performance as his.

Many of the great licks in the following examples were placed near the end of the song, like an artist signing his name at the bottom of a painting—not showoff-y, overplaying stuff, just something cool to say, "Yeah, it's me. Are you listening?" And of course, musicians everywhere heard. You couldn't miss that distinctive sound.

The sheer extent of Jeff's recorded work is mind-boggling, making a comprehensive list impossible. So here are just a few favorites.

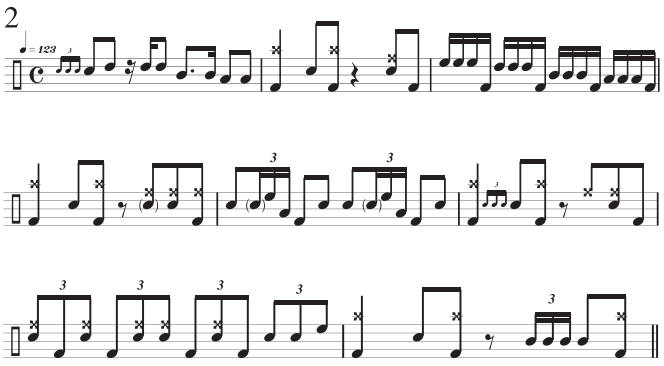
"Your Gold Teeth II" (from Steely Dan's *Katy Lied*, 1975)

An early high point for both Jeff and Steely Dan, this album contains some of his best drumming from *any* era. Jeff pulls off a pretty mean jazz waltz on this track.



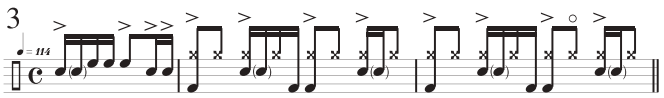
"Doctor Wu" (*Katy Lied*)

Jeff's drum fill selection was always impeccable. Here's part of his solo from the climax of this classic Steely Dan tune. Notice the rhythmic variety in the fills, as well as the clean, uncluttered performance.

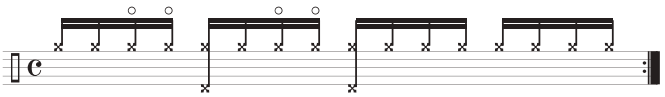


"Lowdown" (from Boz Scaggs' *Silk Degrees*, 1976)

A year later, Jeff was backing Boz Scaggs on the biggest hits of his career. This is a double-tracked drum part, with a 16th-note hi-hat overdub in the left channel. But look at the main beat. The oh-so-subtle ghost notes on the snare, combined with hi-hat accents and pick-ups on the bass drum, spell *groove*.

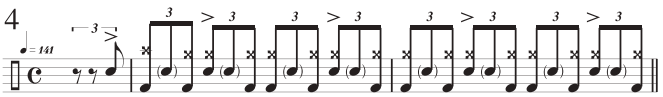


Overdub:



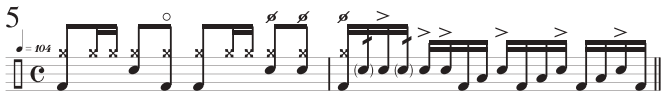
"Lido Shuffle" (*Silk Degrees*)

Here's one of Jeff's most famous beats, a textbook example of the rolling-triplet shuffle. (For more information on this pattern, see my article in the December 2000 issue of *Modern Drummer*.) Jeff played the ghost notes so quietly that they come across like an echo on the snare drum, filling in the middle of each triplet.



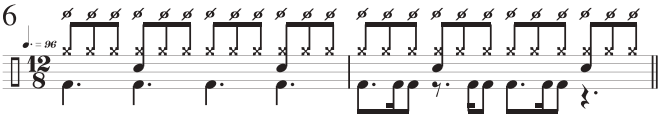
"The Pretender" (from Jackson Browne's *The Pretender*, 1976)

Jeff's tasty hi-hat work was another one of his identifiable sounds. On this Jackson Browne hit, he simmers along on a smooth hi-hat groove, and then drops in a fill that just explodes with his personal style.



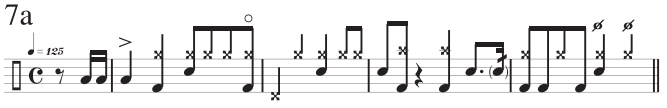
"Hold The Line" (from *Toto*, 1978)

Boz Scaggs' touring band became Toto in 1978. The band's first hit featured an uncommon driving 12/8 feel, with this memorable tricky bass drum flourish near the end of the song.

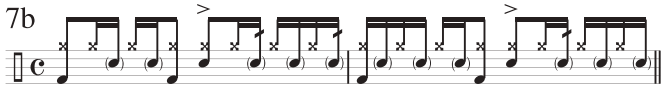


"Gaucho" (from Steely Dan's *Gaucho*, 1980)

Jeff's last recording for Steely Dan was this snakey half-time tune, a minefield of changing rhythms and unexpected offbeat accents. The session went on for hours, and the track was finally cut after perfectionist Steely Dan leader Donald Fagen gave up and left! Jeff's precision throughout the song is remarkable. Here's a snippet from the verse.

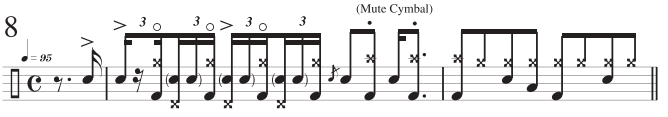


In the song's chorus, Jeff provides a subtle double-time feel with more of his ghost-note wizardry.



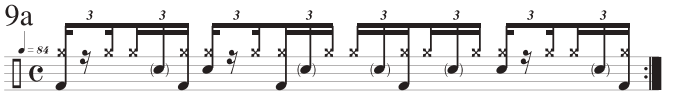
"Jojo" (from Boz Scaggs' *Middle Man*, 1980)

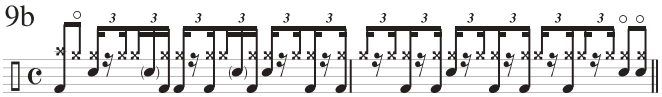
Jeff supplied the perfect R&B flavor for his recordings with Scaggs. Here's a classic funk drum fill, updated and personalized with more signature Porcaro ghost notes.



"Rosanna" (from *Toto IV*, 1982)

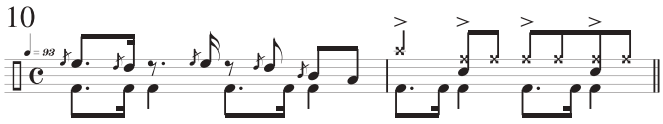
Perhaps Jeff's most-loved groove, this is a half-time version of the "Lido Shuffle" pattern. (See my article "The Half-Time Rolling Triplet Shuffle" in the March 2001 issue of *Modern Drummer*.) Once again, ghost notes provide the magic. Here are Jeff's verse and chorus beats from this Grammy Award–winning hit.





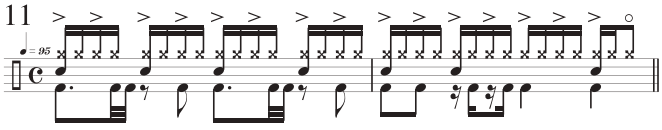
"Africa" (*Toto IV*)

Jeff co-wrote this Number-1 single with Toto keyboardist David Paich. The verse is a loop of 16th-note hi-hat, conga, cowbell, and shaker over a repetitive kick pattern. In his tom fill leading into the first chorus, Jeff vividly depicts the imagery of tribal rhythms.



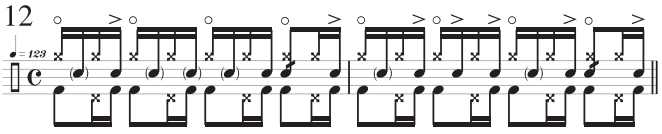
"I Keep Forgettin'" (from Michael McDonald's *If That's What It Takes*, 1982)

Here's another case of Jeff laying down a percolating groove, playing the song with typical restraint, and putting his personal stamp on it with a cool lick near the end. This time, it's a 32nd-note bass drum flourish.



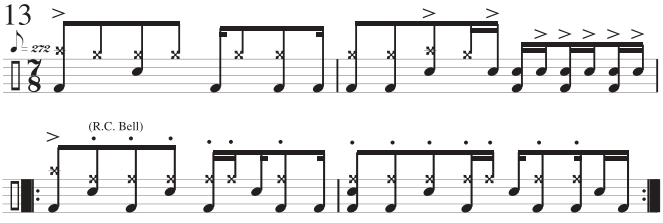
"Calling Elvis" (from Dire Straits' *On Every Street*, 1991)

Jeff plays a classic understated train beat for most of this low-key tune. After he probably figured the song would be long faded out, Jeff starts to jam on this jumpin' samba groove. Dire Straits leader Mark Knopfler must have loved it, because he let the song's final mix stretch to six and a half minutes to keep it in!



"Jake To The Bone" (from Toto's *Kingdom Of Desire*, 1993)

Released after his death, this is the last song on Jeff's final album with his band. Although quoted as saying he hated playing odd times, Jeff absolutely *nails* this lengthy, complex fusion instrumental in 7/8. In this sequence, he kicks into a blazing syncopated double-time, and gives it the Porcaro touch.



After a career as the fiery yet tasteful groove guy, it's intriguing to hear Jeff stretching himself right up to the end. Was this 7/8 tune the beginning of a new direction he was set to explore? Sadly, we'll never know. But there will always be the amazingly extensive and varied body of work to study and be inspired by, from the one-and-only Jeff Porcaro. Play on, brother!

Dynamic Independence

by Art Thompson

MUSIC KEY

H.H.
S.D.
B.D.
H.H. w/foot

Dynamic independence, the ability to play different dynamic levels simultaneously with all four limbs, is a concept that many drummers have difficulty mastering. But having the ability to do this is very important to your musical success.

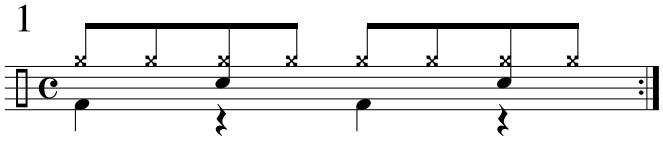
Over the years I've been asked to perform a variety of different styles of music. These styles range from rock and country to big band and small-combo jazz. While learning to play these different styles, I've noticed differences in the dynamic nuances between each. Some are obvious, and some are subtle. Sometimes these details determine whether a groove works for any given style. So for the purposes of this article, let's look at dynamic independence in terms of applying it to grooves.

If you were required to play a jazz gig, you wouldn't want to play "bottom heavy," which would mean playing the bass drum and snare drum louder than the cymbals. In order to play jazz dynamically correctly, the emphasis should be on the cymbals, with the bass drum lightly tapping quarter or half notes. This is typically referred to as playing "top heavy." On the other hand, if you were playing a rock gig, you *would* want to play bottom heavy, because in that style the bass drum and snare drum are what's driving the song.

The ability to adjust your volume in each limb is especially helpful in a studio environment. I've heard engineers complain about having a hard time getting a good balance on someone's kit, because all they could hear through the control room monitors was a wash of cymbals. (This is a more typical problem than the opposite scenario, with the drums burying the cymbals.) Most studio engineers I know tend to like drummers to be hard on the drums and light on the cymbals. The way I interpret this is to simply listen and balance my limbs so that you can hear *everything*. However, the dynamic control has to be there first. Let's take a look at some exercises to get us to that point.

First, let's play a basic rock groove. Start by playing the bass drum and snare drum at about *f* or *ff* (loud to very loud). Play the hi-hat at *p* (soft) and gradually increase the dynamic level to *mp*, then *mf*, *f*, and finally to *ff*. Now gradually bring it back down again to *p*. Be conscious not to let the volume of the bass drum and snare drum change with the hi-hat.

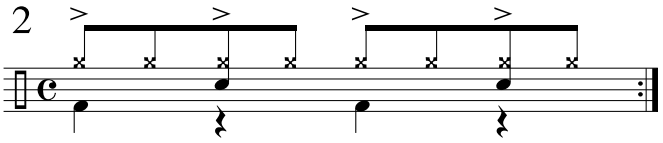
1



Notice how the groove feels more relaxed when the hi-hat is at a softer volume, while the groove tends to have more tension as the hi-hat gets louder. Another thing to experiment with is hitting the hi-hat with different parts of the stick, like the tip or the shoulder. If you're playing modern alternative rock or punk, you may want to play with the shoulder to get a more aggressive sound. If you were playing funk, you would more than likely want to use more of the tip of the stick in order to achieve a tighter, more defined sound.

Now let's take it a step further. Try incorporating up-and-down dynamics in either the ride cymbal or the hi-hat. This means accenting only certain notes while keeping the overall volume level below that of the bass drum and snare drum. One person who did this quite effectively was studio legend Jeff Porcaro. Jeff's hi-hat was constantly moving up and down in dynamics in order to achieve a certain lope or feel. There were other reasons Jeff was great, but his dynamic control added so much depth to his sound.

2



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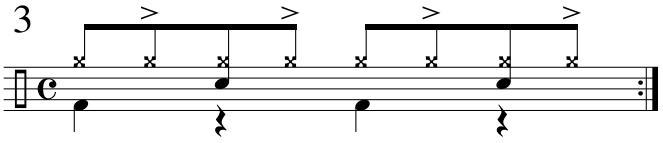

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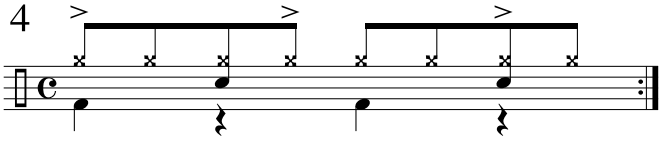
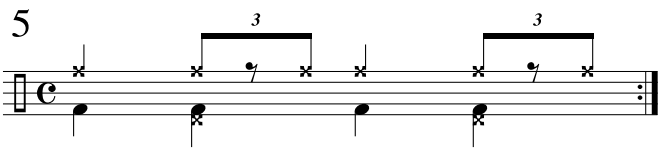


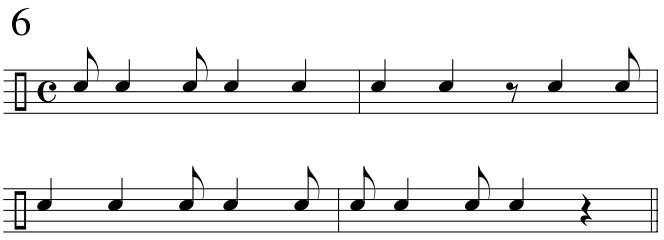
Let's change gears and look at a jazz ride pattern. As we said earlier, jazz tends to put more emphasis and expression on the cymbals while keeping time. Play the right-hand ride-cymbal pattern and the left-foot hi-hat pattern between *mf* and *f*. The quarter notes in the bass drum should start out at about *pp*, and gradually work up to a moderately loud volume such as *mf*. Try not to let the bass drum overpower what's being played on the ride cymbal and hi-hat. Then, like before with the rock beat, gradually bring the volume back down to *pp*.

5

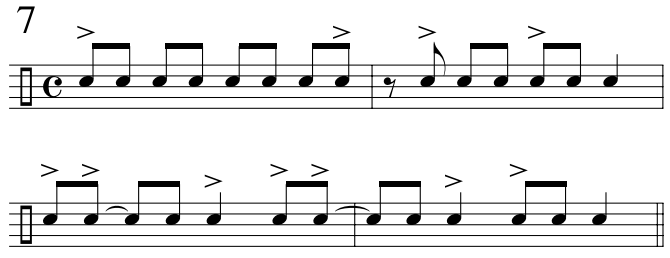


You can experiment with changing the volume of the hi-hat as well. I've heard many jazz drummers say that the hi-hat in that style functions much like the snare drum does in rock. If you're going to attempt to play this style, you should have some amount of control over your left foot.

Now let's add a snare drum part. The following four measures are an excerpt from a reading exercise in a well-known book called *Syncopation,* by Ted Reed. While playing the previous jazz ride pattern, play the rhythm below on the snare drum with your left hand. Be sure to keep the ride and hi-hat patterns predominant and the bass drum at a low volume. The bass drum is to be felt more than heard. The 8th notes should be "swung," giving the rhythm a triplet feel. Adjust the volume of the left hand up and down. Starting at *p,* gradually work your way up to *f,* and then back down to *p*. Again, don't let it affect the volume of everything else.



Another renowned book I recommend is *Advanced Techniques For The Modern Drummer,* by Jim Chapin. In it, Chapin requires the student to accent certain notes within the snare drum rhythm. Here's an example. Once again, swing the 8th notes and play the jazz pattern with the ride cymbal, hi-hat, and bass drum maintaining a consistent volume. Try playing the randomly accented snare drum rhythm at different dynamic levels as well.



These are just some basic examples of how to develop this type of independence. A good start would be to simply be conscious of it, and of course always listen to yourself and to those around you.

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Understanding The Language Of Music

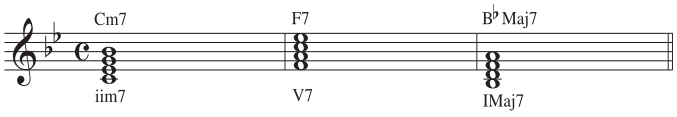
Part 11: Chord Voicings

by Ron Spagnardi

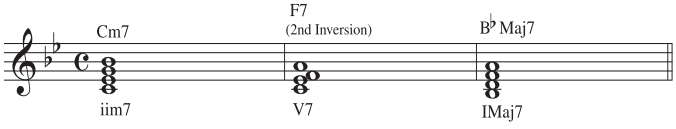
Voice Leading

For the sake of simplicity, we've been notating chords in root position throughout most of this series. This month, we'll look further into achieving *smoother* voice leading through the use of inversions.

Look at the ii, V7, I root position progression in B♭ below. Notice how broken up the sound is and how you're forced to jump around when only root position chords are used.

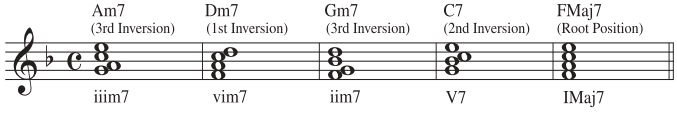


Now look at the same progression, but with the exact same notes in a different position.



Notice how much smoother the F7 chord in second inversion connects from the Cm7 in the first bar to the B♭ Major7 in the third. To achieve smooth voice leading we need to maintain the common tones in each chord whenever possible, and move notes that must change no further than a major 2nd. (When the hands move in wide gaps across the keyboard, chord progressions will rarely sound smooth or cohesive.) Good voice leading simply means a minimum of movement from one chord to the next.

Here's another example using a iii, vi, ii, V7, I progression in F major. Notice how the common tones are maintained through the use of inversions, while voices that must move stay in close proximity to one another.

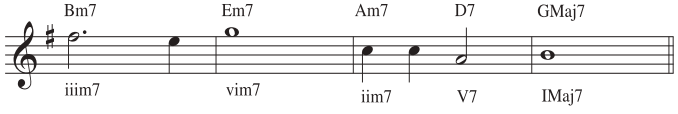


For additional practice, try the ii, V7, I progression in all twelve keys, and focus on achieving the smoothest possible voice leading. The following chart shows the progression in every key.

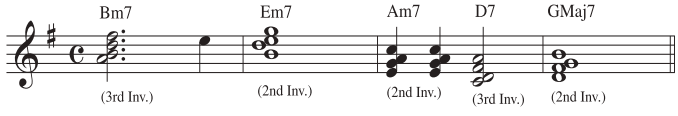
Key	iim7	V7	IMaj7
C	Dm7	G7	Cmaj7
G	Am7	D7	Gmaj7
D	Em7	A7	Dmaj7
A	Bm7	E7	Amaj7
E	F#m7	B7	Emaj7
B	C#m7	F#7	Bmaj7
F	Gm7	C7	Fmaj7
B♭	Cm7	F7	B♭maj7
E♭	Fm7	B♭7	E♭maj7
A♭	B♭m7	E♭7	A♭maj7
D♭	E♭m7	A♭7	D♭maj7
G♭	A♭m7	D♭7	G♭maj7

The Melodic Lead

Smooth voice leading is also essential when building chords below the melodic line. Here's a sample melody over a iii, vi, ii, V7, I progression in the key of G.



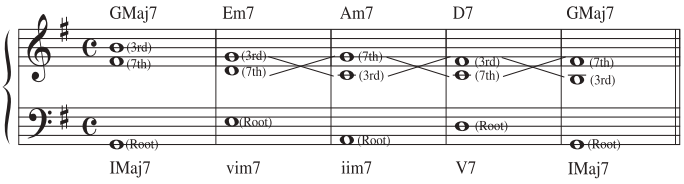
Here's the same melodic line with the notes of the chord progression stacked *beneath* it. Once again, note how inversions aid us in attaining smooth voice leading.



Shell Voicings

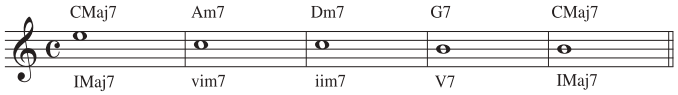
The root of any chord is a relatively important note. Both the 3rd and 7th are also essential, as they identify the quality of the chord (major, minor, or dominant). However, the 5th can usually be omitted without sacrificing the quality of the chord.

In shell voicings, the root of the chord is played with the left hand. The right hand plays the 3rd and 7th, while the 5th is omitted. Play the progression below and notice how the quality of the chords are still recognizable without the 5th. Also notice how the 3rd and 7th of each chord alternate position to achieve smooth voice leading.

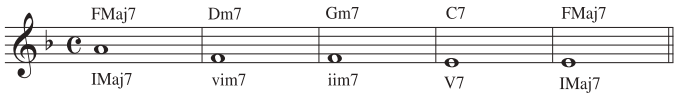


Experiment with the following I, vi, ii, V7, I progression in the keys of C, F, B♭, and E♭. Determine if the top voice is the 3rd or 7th of the chord, and stack a shell voicing beneath it. Play the root of the chord with the left hand, and strive for the smoothest possible voice leading with the right.

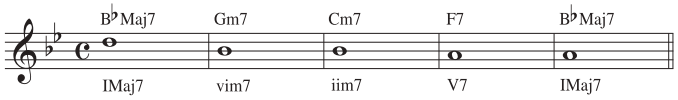
Key Of C



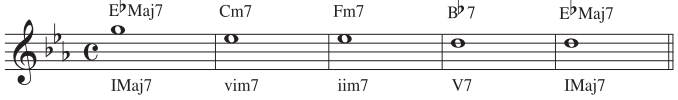
Key Of F



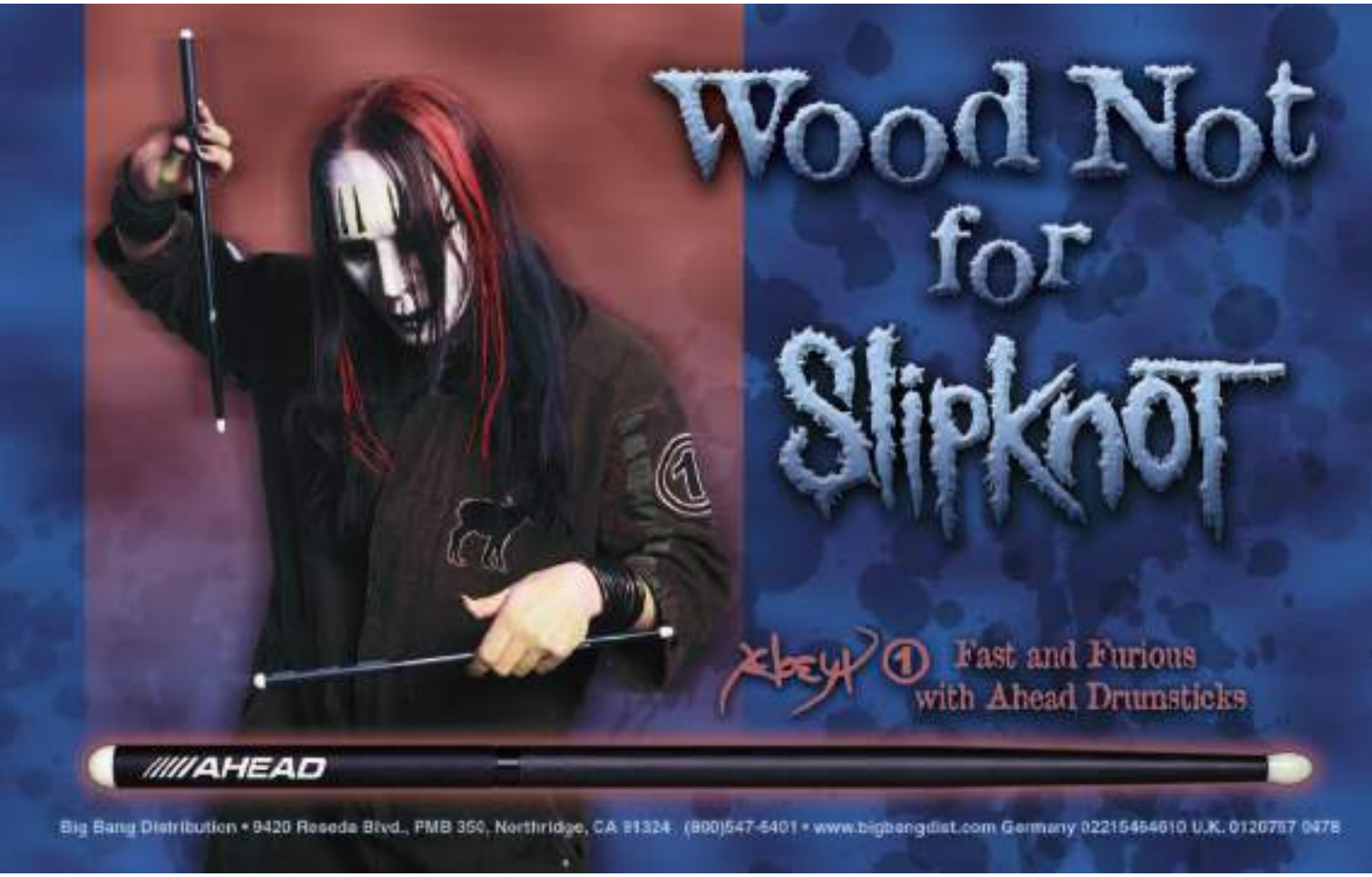
Key Of B♭



Key Of E♭



Next month, in Part 12 of this series, we'll learn about notes that can be added to 7th chords, commonly known as chordal extensions.

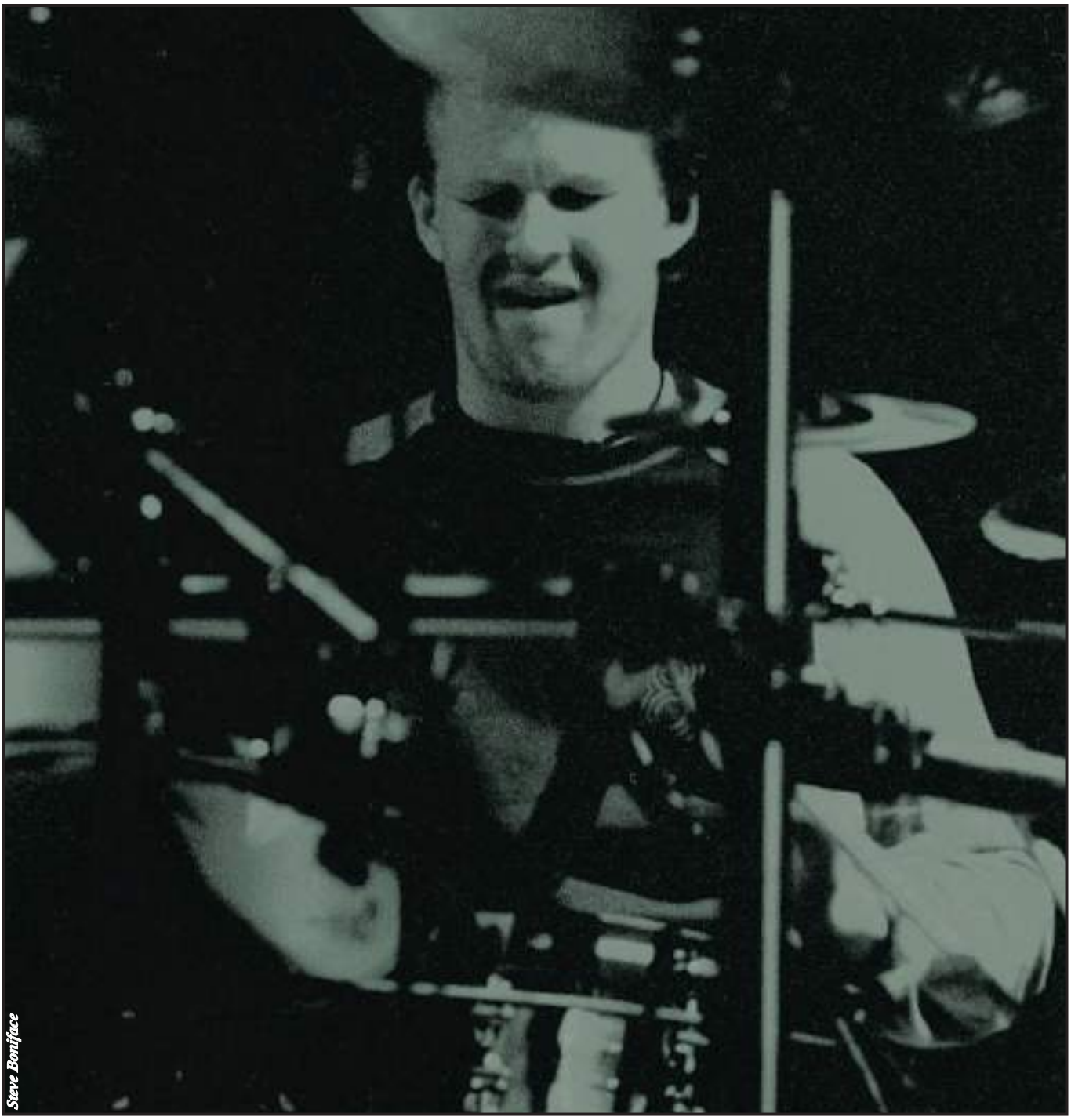


Nickelback's

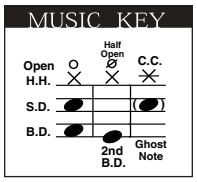
Ryan Vikedal

Silver Side Up

by Ed Breckenfeld



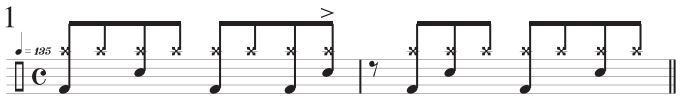
Steve Boniface



The second album from Nickelback has been making some major noise. In fact, "How You Remind Me" is the first single from a Canadian rock band to simultaneously top the American and Canadian charts in thirty years! Ryan Vikedal takes a powerful, straightforward approach to his drumming, driving the band's hard-edged sound while finding spots for some tasty and intricate licks.

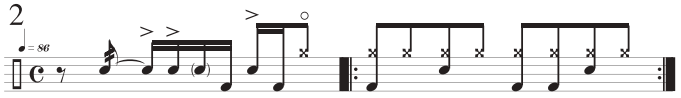
"Never Again"

The opening cut is an angry condemnation of spousal abuse, and Ryan drives home the point in two-fisted fashion.



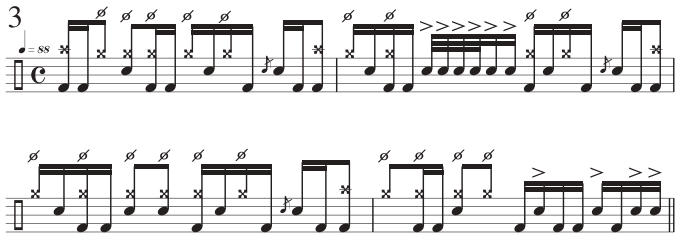
"How You Remind Me"

The breakthrough single features a slick drum entrance with some nice double-stroke and bass drum work.



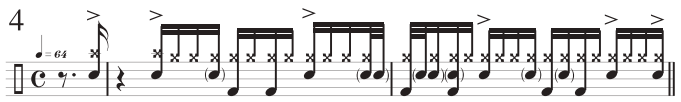
"Woke Up This Morning"

The last four bars of this tune contain this terrific sequence, with Ryan ending the song on a paradiddle between the bass and snare.



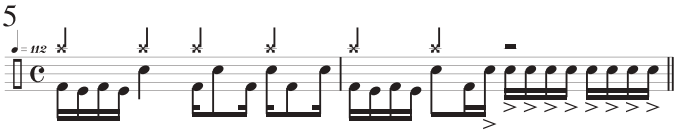
"Too Bad"

Ryan breaks out a fancy ghost-note passage in the verse of the album's second single.



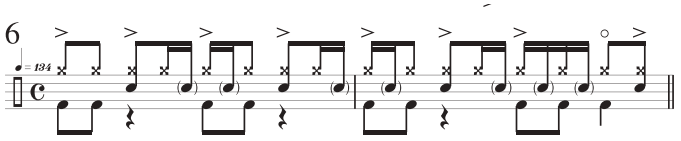
"Just For"

A double-kick pattern underscores the emotion of this revenge song.



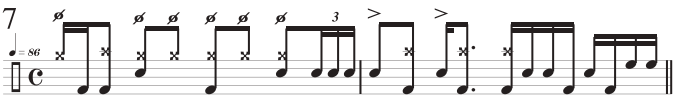
"Money Bought"

Ryan's ghost notes show up again in the verse of this tune. Watch for the moved-over snare hit at the end of the second measure.



"Hangnail"

The set-up for the second verse in this song features more syncopated bass and snare interplay.



Improv Playhouse

Tips For Developing Your Creative Side

by Matt Wilson

Please rise from your drum throne and recite the Improviser's Affirmation:

I (say your name) hereby proudly declare on this day (say today's date), right here with my trusty drumset as a witness, that I am an improviser.

I play, explore, and courageously venture into the land of the musically unexpected with uninhibited enthusiasm.

I am not selfish, and I play well with others.

I express myself fully aware that the potential risk of failure is present and I am totally *cool with that. This realization liberates me from the restrictive pressure of succeeding. Most important, I allow myself and my fellow musicians to—doggone it—*have fun.

You may be seated. (Remain standing if you play a cocktail drum.)

Okay folks, you're committed. You've taken the solemn oath that you are an improviser. There's no turning back! Actually, you were already an improviser and perhaps didn't even know it. You may be saying to yourself, "But Crazy Matt, how can this be?"

My friends, improvising is part of all our lives. How many of you have your day go *exactly* as you planned it? It seems we are constantly adjusting and making do with what we have at hand. We're reacting, experimenting, and creating with results that often, by accident, are astonishing.

Have you ever created a culinary masterpiece with what was available in the kitchen? I wonder who improvised the first peanut butter and jelly sandwich? Now *that* was an interesting solo! And think about all of the improvising done daily with duct tape. What a fantastic instrument; where would we be without it? (Time for an inspirational quote: "In the beginner's mind the possibilities are endless, but in the expert's mind there are few."—Shunryu Suzuki.)

> "Improvising is part of all our lives. How many of you have your day go exactly as you planned it?"

Improvising is way cool because it's an equalizer. It doesn't matter if you've been playing for five months or fifty years. You can do it *right now*. I have experienced music flowing from master musicians so moving it changed my life. I've also heard young musicians improvise music so beautiful it brought me to tears. In both instances, the musicians were not hung up by what they could or could not do. They just let the music happen.

The material in this series of articles is for everyone. It doesn't matter if you play jazz, metal, ska, country, hardcore, blues, avant-garde, polkas, or hip-hop. Music is music. Expression is expression. Musicians must work to develop technical facility, but I feel it's important to devote equal time to opening our creative channels. Since the drumset is primarily an improvisational instrument, this discovery is imperative. How we contribute to music creatively and spiritually should be our highest priority.

Let's begin the fun-filled festivities.

Howdy Partner!
Getting To Know Our Drumset

Greet your instrument, say hello, give it a wink, a smile (smiling is good!), a gentle pat on the floor tom. Your instrument is your friend and wants you to play well and be comfortable. Make necessary adjustments so that you are sitting with good posture and can move in a relaxed fashion.

We want to play *with* our instrument, not control it. You are partners and need to develop a trusting relationship. How would all of you feel if I proudly announced, "After many years of training I have developed the skills necessary to be in full control of my wife." Cards and letters would flood the offices of *Modern Drummer,* plus I would be out on the street!

After you have exchanged greetings, just sit for a few moments and breathe. Hear the

breath and visualize its flow. In order to have ideas flow, our breath must flow. Enjoy spending this quality quiet time with your drumset.

Reach out and just touch parts of your set. Get reacquainted with where everything is located and how the surfaces feel. We want to feel connected in every way possible.

Pick up a utensil of your choice from your stick bag. I want you to play a sound. Why *play* and not *make* a sound? Because music is played, not made.

Playing is an essential part of the human experience. Through play we allow ourselves to explore and discover. Check out children to witness amazing improvising. I'm sure you've heard the universal complaint, "Got the kids the big toy they wanted, and heck, they'd rather play with the box it came in."

As you explore the drumset, *hear* the sounds you play. Do you listen or do you hear? I believe hearing is a deeper form of listening. Take time to develop your hearing. Listen to the same tune from a recording every day for two weeks. Focus your attention on all that occurs. You'll be surprised at what you'll discover.

As you play, hear and feel the sound from the beginning to the very end. Play the sound with your eyes open and shut. Recall the sound without making it. Experience the silence as the sound dissipates.

I often feel that musicians don't hear what they're playing. This, in turn, affects how they flow and blend with the music happening around them. Hear and feel what you're playing! Know your instrument. It's your voice for expression.

The Eccentric Exercise Portion Of The Show

Here's a list of exercises I'd like you to try. First, take the time to really get to know that beautiful 20" ride perched so elegantly on the cymbal stand. Play the edge, strike the bell, crash it. (You all know it's perfectly okay to crash a ride, and vice-versa, right? You'll not receive a summons to appear in cymbal court.)

Take it for a walk or a drive.

Perhaps name your set or parts of your set. Maybe name your snare drum Ralph? Learn all about Ralph and all of his likes and dislikes.

Recall the first time you laid eyes on your set.

Read to your drumset. Advertisements and product reviews from *Modern Drummer* are a nice read. Vintage drum and cymbal catalogs give your set a glimpse of how it was in the old days.

Set up your kit totally backwards and play. Play it from underneath and sideways.

If your set were a superhero, who would it be?

Call your drummer friends and arrange for a drumset play date.

Pretend you're an extra-terrestrial sent here to explore the earthling's drumset. You must report your findings back to your commanding officer Zorggon 7.

Polish your set.

Have dinner at the drums. (Candlelight is a nice touch.)

Send a postcard to your drums while you're on vacation. When you get home, show your vacation pictures to your drumset.

Write a poem about your drumset. Here's one of mine:

Sound Friend (haiku)
my friend awaits me
we play together a sound
so lovely and free

Time for another inspirational quote: The wise Ed Soph once told me, "Your only limitation is your own imagination." Make it a mantra. Go forth and express thyself! Remember, music is *fun*.

Feel free to email me at matwiljazz@aol.com.

Matt Wilson—drummer, composer, educator, and schemer—currently leads three projects, the Matt Wilson Quartet, Arts & Crafts, and The Carl Sandburg Project. In addition, he is a sideman in several diverse musical units, including those led by Dewey Redman, Bill Mays, Jane Ira Bloom, Denny Zeitlin, and Ray Anderson. Matt has appeared on over ninety releases as a sideman and has recorded four critically acclaimed releases for the Palmetto label. His fifth effort, Humidity*, will be released in early 2003. In his spare time, Matt is a father to a four-year-old daughter and one-year-old-triplet sons. (Buy his records, please!)*

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*KICK PEDAL AND SNARE STAND SOLD SEPARATELY

My Toolbox

More Mechanisms...And A Little Studio Experience

by Billy Ward

Remember the mechanics stuff I talked about in my last few articles? (I speak about this a lot in my clinics, in master classes, and with my bandmates.) I want to give you a few more examples of mechanisms that can help us drummers groove and play in time.

There are mental and emotional mechanisms as well as physical ones. For instance, let's say there's a song that in general feels bad, but the chorus works. (Everything else is mush...uncertain ...blech!) Sometimes, understanding the mechanisms of the successful section of the song can help solve the arrangement issues of problem sections.

What exactly is it that makes that chorus section feel better? Why does our drumming feel so good in the chorus, but so bad everywhere else? There's probably a part that the guitarist (or keyboardist, or maybe even the bass player) is playing that makes it all come together for you as a drummer. That part, to me, is a mechanism. You're not playing it, but it's there for you. Use it!

"A drummer on a pop session is, in a small way, like a worker bee. You have to dig into your job."

Just before you count off that song, sing that part to yourself. Also sing it to yourself as you play the intro and then the first verse. Do they feel better? (I bet they do.) You've just added a mechanism. By the way, this mechanism is very helpful for those first few bars of that problem song—you know, the one that doesn't "settle in" until a few bars have gone by.

Tempo & Attitude

There are tempo and groove (or attitude) mechanisms that I use as well. If I'm having trouble remembering the attitude, tempo, or groove of a song I'm playing, I relate it to some classic tune that I know by heart. Let's face it, there are songs that we'll never forget. They're a part of us. For me, the list includes songs by Steely Dan, The Clash, The Ramones, Jimi Hendrix, James Brown, Prince, The Beatles, Miles—and miles and miles and miles of other songs. (The Who, anyone?) There are even a ton of songs on my list that I'd be embarrassed to admit! But all of this knowledge is useful.

Ever since the OJ Simpson trial, I've called this mechanism "knowing a song's DNA." If I'm rehearsing a song that reminds me of one of these I'll-know-it-till-the-day-I-die songs, I use the memory of that song's DNA—its tempo, its attitude—to get me into the vibe of what I'm counting off.

Remembering the song you're counting off can also be difficult, especially when you're playing in several different bands all in the same week (or sometimes here in New York, on the same day). When I'm rehearsing a song and it has a vibe that reminds me of a tune I really know, I think of that song. It's a trick I use to help me count off the tune with the correct tempo and vibe. Many times, I write the "other" song title on the set list in parentheses.

Before I started doing this, I had a few times when I counted off the wrong song. Doh! "Sorry, dudes, I thought it was a ballad!" Hey, I admit it, I use mechanisms too.

How Much Suck Would You Like With That, Sir?

Drummers frequently ask me about time. "How imperfect can I be?" "How perfect do I need to be?" "Do I have to be 'dead on' with a click track?" First of all, this is music. This is also the music business. But it *isn't* school. If you're looking outside of yourself to bandmates or producers for an "A" or even a passing grade, you'll never be truly content.

continued on page 100

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Billy Ward

We *all* wish we had better time, and we all probably work as hard at it as we can. Your truest satisfaction will someday come from within you, and that's another great thing about being a musician. That said, I'd like to mention that most of my favorite drummers, if soloed with the click, would be *near* the click, not burying it. But most importantly, regarding the groove, these drummers would be consistent from bar to bar.

I've met more than a few drummers with jazz influences who have trouble really locking in with a click on pop sessions. Their ears get swayed by the guide vocal or guitar solo, and they aren't able to stick to the click. To make matters worse, some producers want the band to track together, but with only the drummer having the click in the headphones. So the band's time can get totally out to lunch, and there we drummers are, holding on to that nasty click!

So what's the solution? A good producer will listen to suggestions and be willing to try things. So first, ask if everyone can have the click. I do this all the time, even if the other musicians have great time, because I like everyone to be in the same "setting" or picture frame. But sometimes we find ourselves working with a producer or engineer who is unwilling to change his game plan for the session, so you're stuck with the steady click and an unsteady band.

This subject also touches on the "jazzy touchy-feelie vibe" compared to the "just-hammer-the-darned-snare" thing. To me, in what I call popular music (like rock), there's a work ethic that is different from that of jazz. A drummer on a pop session is, in a small way, like a worker bee. You have to *dig into* your job. That job totally involves being with the click. That way, when over the next nine months the other musicians are overdubbing and mixing, they aren't cussing you out for your bad time. (By the way, it *is* proper to ask if there will be MIDI overdubs or overdubs by humans. With humans, you can stretch the feel a bit, but with MIDI instruments you have to be dead on—period.)

Some drummers worry that if they play to a click their own "voice" won't come out. Have faith that your uniqueness is coming through even though you're only observing the click. Trust me. Your uniqueness shines. So let's not be stubborn about this. Let's just get the job done. Play with the click and make some music. (This is also a situation where you may need more volume of click and less of the bad-timing band.)

Want more click nightmares when only the drummer has the click? How about a rock-influenced drummer playing in an R&B band? If it isn't natural to you, learning how to lay back is a hard thing to do. It takes practice. What can we do or say when the singer (who doesn't hear the click track) wants us to lay back even more? Unless it's a drum solo, a groove (including a laid-back groove) is played by a band. If your critic doesn't hear the click, you might want to request during playback at the studio that the click be heard. The click is simply a reference!

A moment of show & tell can work wonders sometimes. Simply ask the engineer to add the click for a few bars during the playback. Listen to it go by. If the drums aren't "out of line," you may not need to say anything in support of your performance—or be critical of theirs. They may get it. But maybe a study needs to be conducted. That's okay, too. I've done it in front of famous rock stars. (I've stunk with the best!)

Solo the drums, bass, and rhythm guitar both with and without the click in front of everyone. Listen to different combinations and try to figure out as a group what can be done to make things better. Stay open and prove that you are willing to learn, but also stand by your dedication and curiosity. (I'm convinced curiosity is one of the greatest qualities of any artist.) If, after hearing the track with the click, you realize you *are* messing up, then go back to the shop. Go to your practice room for more mechanics.

Many times I've apologized for a particular take in which I got out of control or messed up. It happens. These mistakes can add to the comedy and fun of a session. We're humans and we're trying to make art. So feel free to put a microscope on the music itself. Try to keep your ego under control. Listen together to everything (including the click at times) and figure it out *together*.

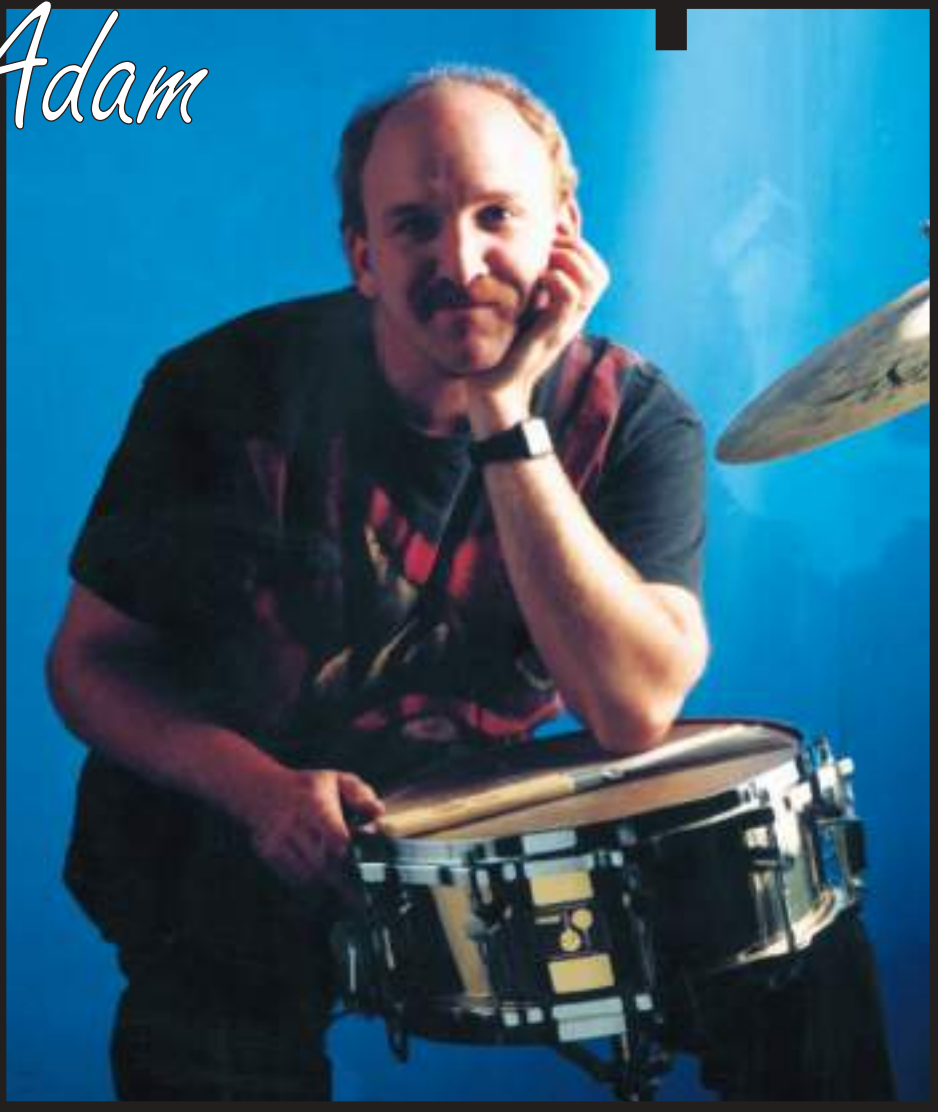
Billy Ward is a successful session and touring drummer who has worked with Carly Simon, Robbie Robertson, Richard Marx, Ace Frehley, John Patitucci, Bill Champlin, and Joan Osborne. Billy can be reached at his Web site, www.billyward.com.

Take A Tip

From Adam

"*Modern Drummer* is *the* place where the entire drumming community benefits from people who know what's been, what is, and what will be. I like to be in the know."

— Adam Nussbaum



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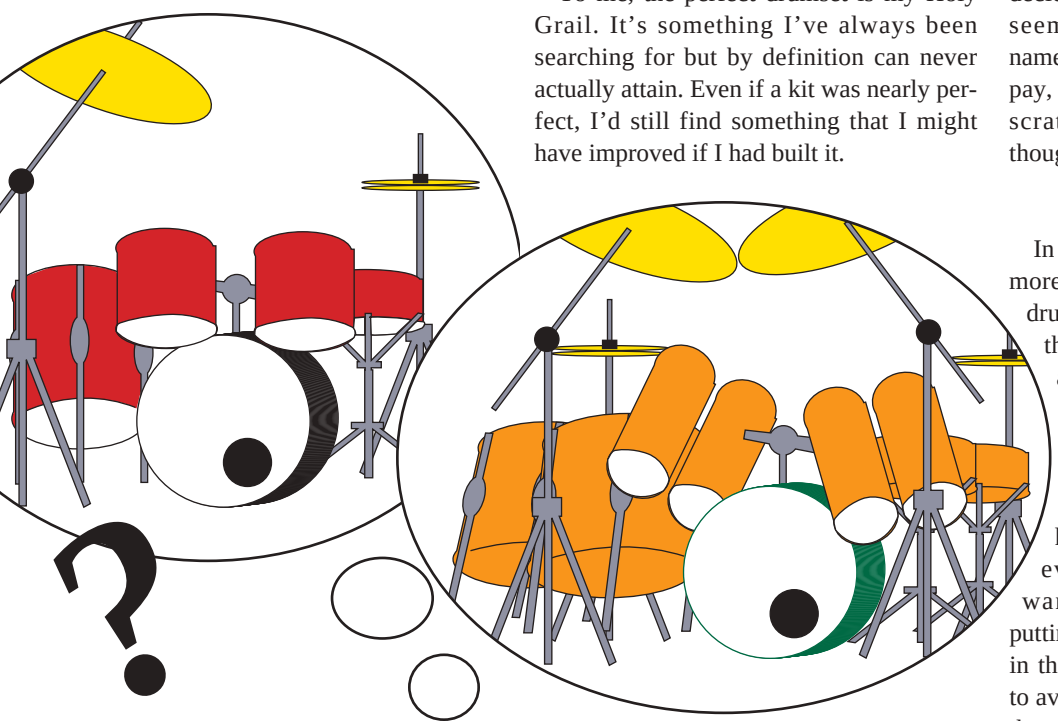
Building Your Own Drumset: What Every Amateur Needs To Know

Part 1: Decisions, Decisions

by Paul Bielewicz



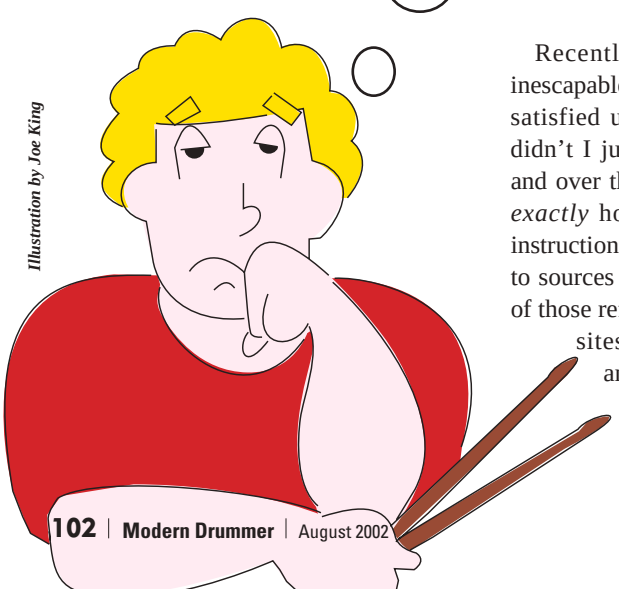


Illustration by Joe King

After years of playing studio sessions and live gigs in every conceivable venue—and going through multiple kits in the process—I've come to a realization. I'll never be completely satisfied with a drumset.

To me, the perfect drumset is my Holy Grail. It's something I've always been searching for but by definition can never actually attain. Even if a kit was nearly perfect, I'd still find something that I might have improved if I had built it.

Recently, this situation led me to an inescapable conclusion. If I could never be satisfied unless I built my own kit, why didn't I just *build* my own kit? So I did, and over the next four months I'll tell you *exactly* how I did it. I'll be giving you instructions, tips, and occasional references to sources of additional information. Some of those references are manufacturers' Web sites. I'm not officially endorsing anybody, though. I'm just telling you where data that influenced *my* choices may be found.

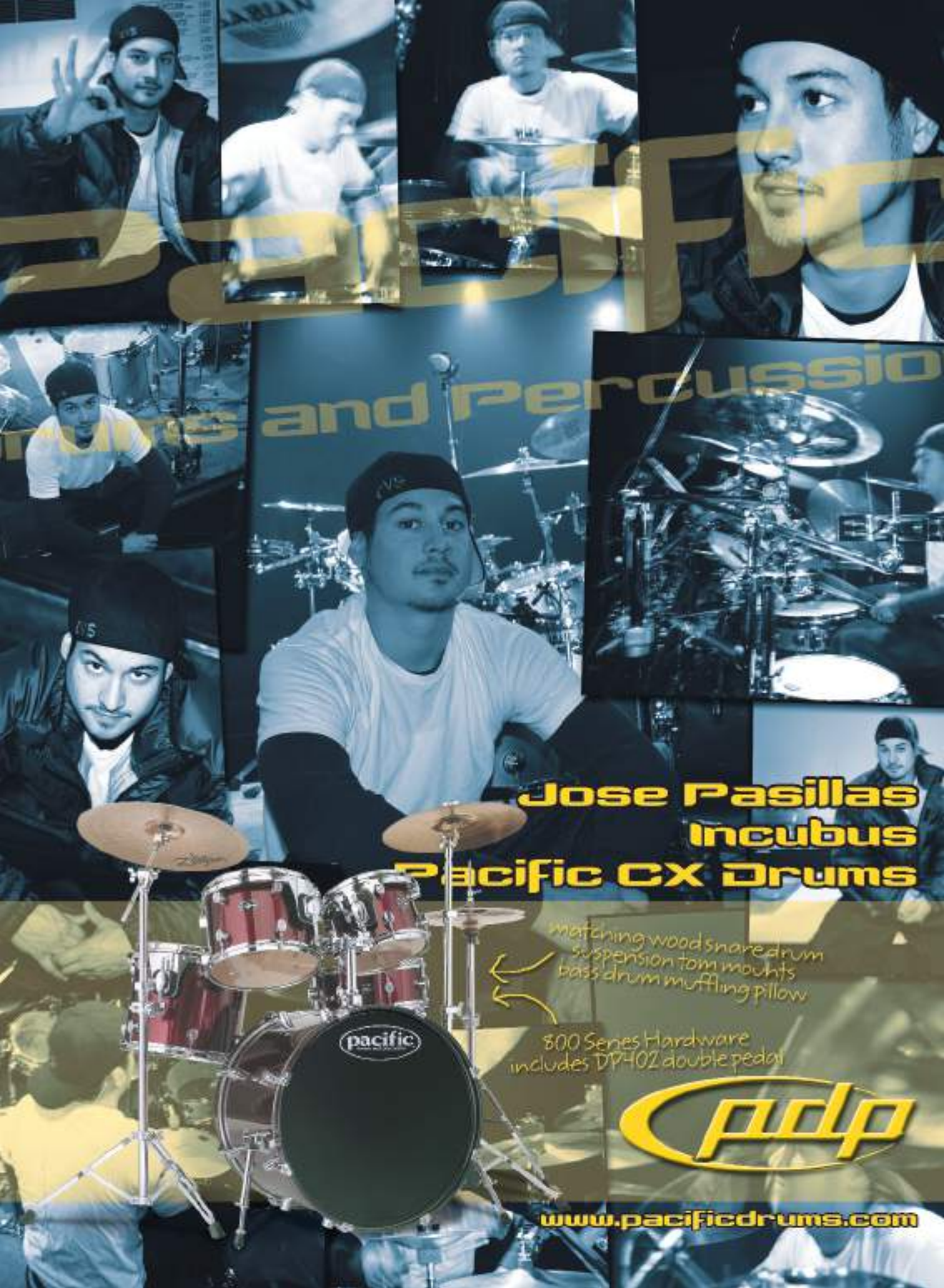
A Word Of Caution

Building a kit from scratch may not be a good idea for everybody. It is in no way easy or cheap. You must be prepared to spend many hours and hundreds of dollars, depending on how large a project you decide to undertake. But if you just can't seem to get everything you want in a name-brand kit at a price you're willing to pay, read on. Building your own kit from scratch may not be as difficult as you thought.

What Qualifies Me?

In point of fact, nothing makes me any more qualified to tell you how to build a drumset than the average drummer. But that's why I've written this article *for* amateur drum builders, from the perspective *of* an amateur. The article traces the evolution of a drumkit that I—as an amateur—built from scratch. In it, you'll learn what you'll need to know to build a drumkit, including everything from deciding what you want, to obtaining the materials, to putting it together, to the mistakes I made in the process and how you might be able to avoid such mistakes. (I earnestly suggest that you read the entire series before you begin your own project.)

I do have a few advantages that I applied in my endeavor to build my kit. I'm a recent graduate from an engineering university, and I currently work as an engineer. This has contributed in many ways to my understanding of the mechanical aspects of building drums. I've also been playing drums for about ten years, which has contributed to my knowing which drumming situation calls for what gear. In addition, I worked at a specialty drum store for two years, which taught me what makes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drums sound the way they do, and what customers look for in *their* drums. Finally, I've been an avid reader of *Modern Drummer* for as long as I've played. I attribute everything else I know about drums to that fact.

Oops!

During the course of building my kit, I made my share of mistakes. (It was a learning process, after all.) These mistakes are covered in each section to which they pertain under the sub-heading "Oops!" Each mistake will be detailed and explained thoroughly, including what the contributing factors were, and how you can avoid making similar mistakes.

Step 1: Deciding What You Want

Deciding exactly what you want in a kit can be the most difficult step in the entire operation. The problem is that every drumming situation calls for something a little different from the drummer and his or her kit. Before you can decide exactly what you want in a kit, you have to figure what situations that kit will be used in, and try to strike a happy medium, satisfying as many criteria as possible.

There are *lots* of decisions you'll have to make before starting your kit. How many pieces do you require (or can you afford)? What material do you want to use for the shells? What sizes do you want? How do you want the finished kit to look?

Be very certain that you've considered all your options and come to a firm decision before you actually start the building process. Once you've begun, it's very difficult to make major changes in design.

Deciding exactly what you want in a kit can be the most difficult step in the entire operation.

Shells

In my opinion, the most important aspect of a drumset is the material and construction of the shells. The material influences every aspect of a shell's performance, including pitch, sustain, tone, and depth.

Although steel, aluminum, and synthetic composite drums are available today, most drumsets are made of wood, and the majority of those are made of either maple or birch. Consider these factors when deciding which material to use. More importantly, however, consider availability. Composite shells are rare, and steel or aluminum shells are nearly impossible to find. Raw birch shells are also difficult to obtain. Maple shells, on the other hand, are available through almost any major drum-supply company. This was the main factor influencing my decision to use maple shells.

A thin shell will produce a lower pitch than a thick shell. However, a thick shell is more durable. Determining the right compromise between pitch and durability can be tricky. The greater the diameter of the shell, the more fragile a thin shell is going to be. Therefore, for a bigger shell, it makes more sense to use a thicker ply count. For a snare, a thicker shell leads to higher pitch, brighter sound, and better crack. A rule of thumb I like to use is:

8" diameter: 5-ply
8"–12" diameter: 6-ply
13"+ diameter: 8-ply
snare (any diameter): 10-ply

These specifications are in no way set in stone, but simply a guide. On a larger bass drum (22"+), sometimes it's not a bad idea to go with a 10-ply shell. But unless you're going to be standing on it, an 8-ply shell should be durable enough for just about any playing situation. This is all relative, however, because individual ply thickness varies from manufacturer to manufacturer. Besides ply count, one should also consider total thickness of the shell.

Another thing to consider is reinforcing rings. These are narrow (generally about 1") maple rings, usually 3-ply, that are affixed to the top and bottom of the inside

of the shell to add strength and durability. They are especially valuable in adding strength to a thinner drum. It is important to know, however, that a reinforcement ring significantly raises the pitch of a drum, usually between a half to a full step. Drum Workshop is one of the few major high-end drum manufacturers today that offer reinforcing rings with their kits.

Another thing to consider is what type of bearing edges you desire. Bearing edges are the angles cut on the top and bottom of a drum shell. If a drum didn't have bearing edges, the entire cross-section of the shell would contact the head, completely damping the resonance and muddying the pitch.

Today, bearing edges are usually cut at a 45° angle from the top outside corner of the shell to create a sharp edge, thereby decreasing the amount of surface area that touches the head and increasing the resonance of the drum. Prior to the 1980s, however, bearing edges were rounder, allowing more surface area to touch the head for a fatter, warmer sound. (That's why some drummers prefer the sound of a vintage kit to a newer kit with sharper edges.)

In a variation on a theme, the Spaun Drum Co. offers its kits with double 45° bearing edges. That is, a 45° bearing edge is cut on the inside and outside of the shell, centering the point in the middle of the edge. The theory behind this is that virtually all drumheads produced today have a rounded collar formed into the Mylar near the area where it is folded into the metal hoop. A single 45° edge projected in from the outside of the shell contacts the head at the point where this rounded collar is, creating an unnatural pinch point, and damping the drum's resonance. A double 45° edge contacts the head at a point farther to the inside than the collar reaches. This suspends the head over the drum, in a similar fashion to how a timpani head contacts the body of a timpani. This suspension of the head increases resonance, and creates a better overall tone. Therefore, on my set, I used shells with double 45° bearing edges on all the drums. (For more information on double 45° bearing edges, surf to www.spaundrums.com.)

The Bass Drum

The characteristics of the bass drum and the snare drum are critically important, since these are the two pieces of the kit we play the most. No matter how complicated a pattern or how difficult a part, nearly everything we play involves these two drums.

Snare drums come and go, but the bass drum remains the integral foundation of any kit. Today, a 22"-diameter bass drum is the standard—as it has been for the past five decades. So why would I want to change things? Well, play a smaller bass drum and you'll know. To help you understand where I'm coming from, I'd like to relate an anecdote.

About a year ago, after witnessing the popularity of Yamaha's HipGig drumkit with a 16" bass drum, I decided to try a smaller bass drum myself. I was working at the drumshop at the time, and there was an old Ludwig maple floor tom in the back room. I ripped off the beat-up black wrap and discovered a beautiful natural maple shell underneath. I sanded and refinished the shell to a nice satin-blond look. I added a thick batter head, a thin resonant head, and two Remo Muff'ls, then turned the drum on its side and pounded it with a beater.

I couldn't believe how much volume and tone came out of such a small bass drum! I had to devise a few L-rods to rig it up to a playable height, but once I did, there was no going back to full size. I later completed the kit with some more old shells I found at the shop and refinished: a 5x10 rack tom and a 12x12 suspended "floor" tom.

Based on this experience, I knew I wanted a small bass drum for my new kit. But I also needed a versatile drum capable of producing the volume I'd need if I played unmiked. For these reasons, I decided to go with an 18" bass. The standard 16" depth that most 18" shells come in would be fine.

The Snare Drum

I've always preferred a bright, high-pitched snare sound. For the past couple of years I've played piccolo snares, usually 13" in diameter. I really enjoy the loud, tight crack I can get in a live situation and the solid backbeat the 13" size offers in

the studio. I own a 3x13 piccolo, which has great crack but hardly any depth. But I recently played a 6x13 snare, and I came to like it. It could be tuned high or low, with plenty of depth at any pitch. Again, for my new kit versatility was the name of the game, so I decided that a 6x13 snare would be a good way to go.

Toms

After settling on the bass and snare, I had to decide what I wanted in the way of toms. Over the years, I've learned that for most playing situations, less is more. This has led me to work on playing what would normally be four- or five-tom fills on only two toms. It's so much easier not having to lug around all those extra toms—especially since I was really only playing each of them a couple times a night. I also came to enjoy how close in the two-tom setup allowed me to bring the ride cymbal.

Once I decided on two toms, I had to determine their sizes. On a traditional two-tom setup, the rack tom would be a 12", or perhaps a 13". But I already knew I didn't want anything that big. On the high-end kits that had passed through the shop in the time I worked there, the 10" toms always sounded the best. They were the easiest to tune, and always had the right combination of roundness and character of sound. So, my rack tom would be a 10".

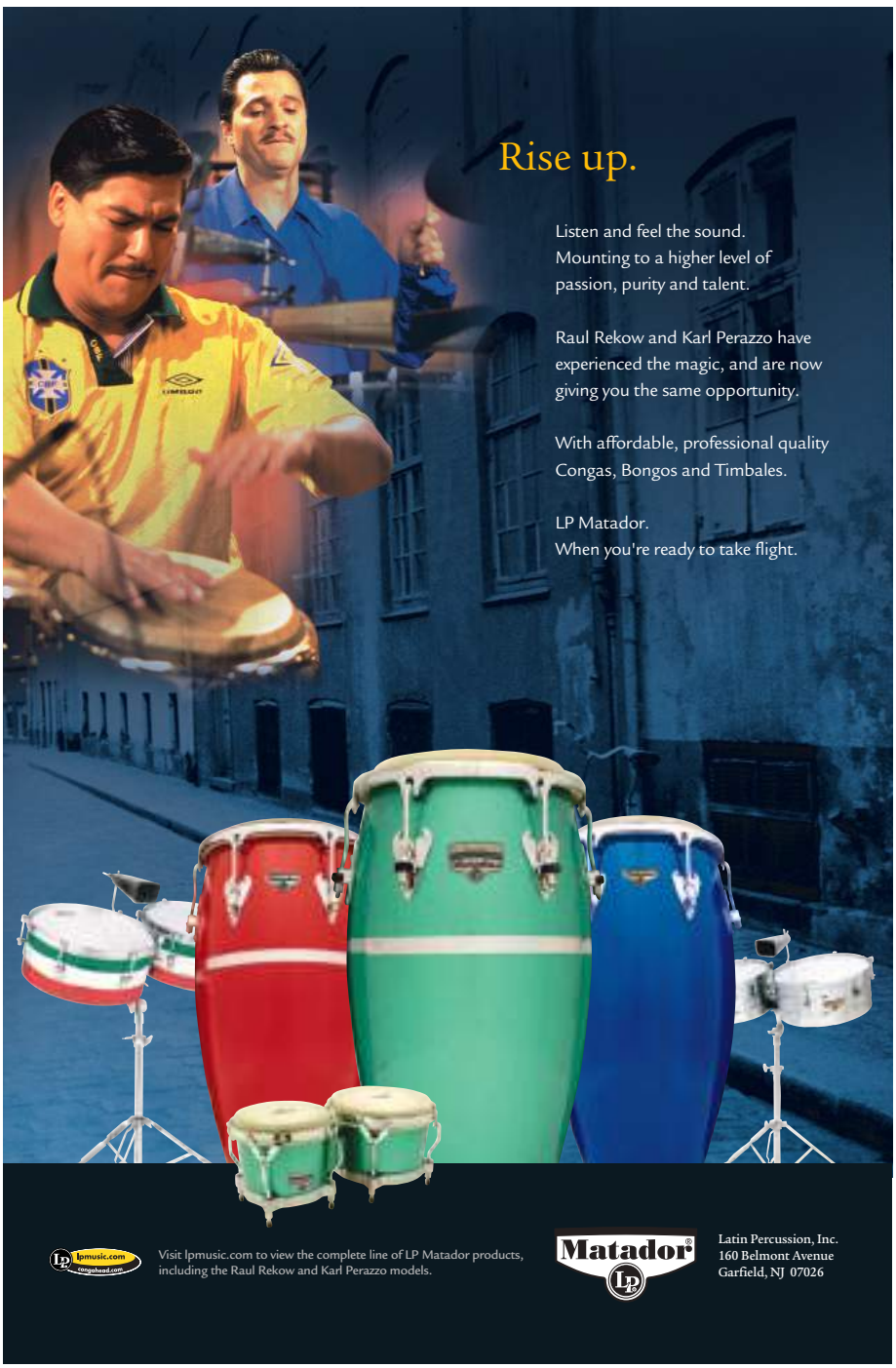
For the second tom, I knew a 10"/16" differential would be pretty severe. Again, through my experience at the store, I learned that 14" can be a very versatile size. It can give you the low pitch of a 16", but avoids the muddiness some 16" toms can get when tuned loosely. Through experience, I've also come to learn that 10" and 14" toms together are a great combination. So that became my choice.

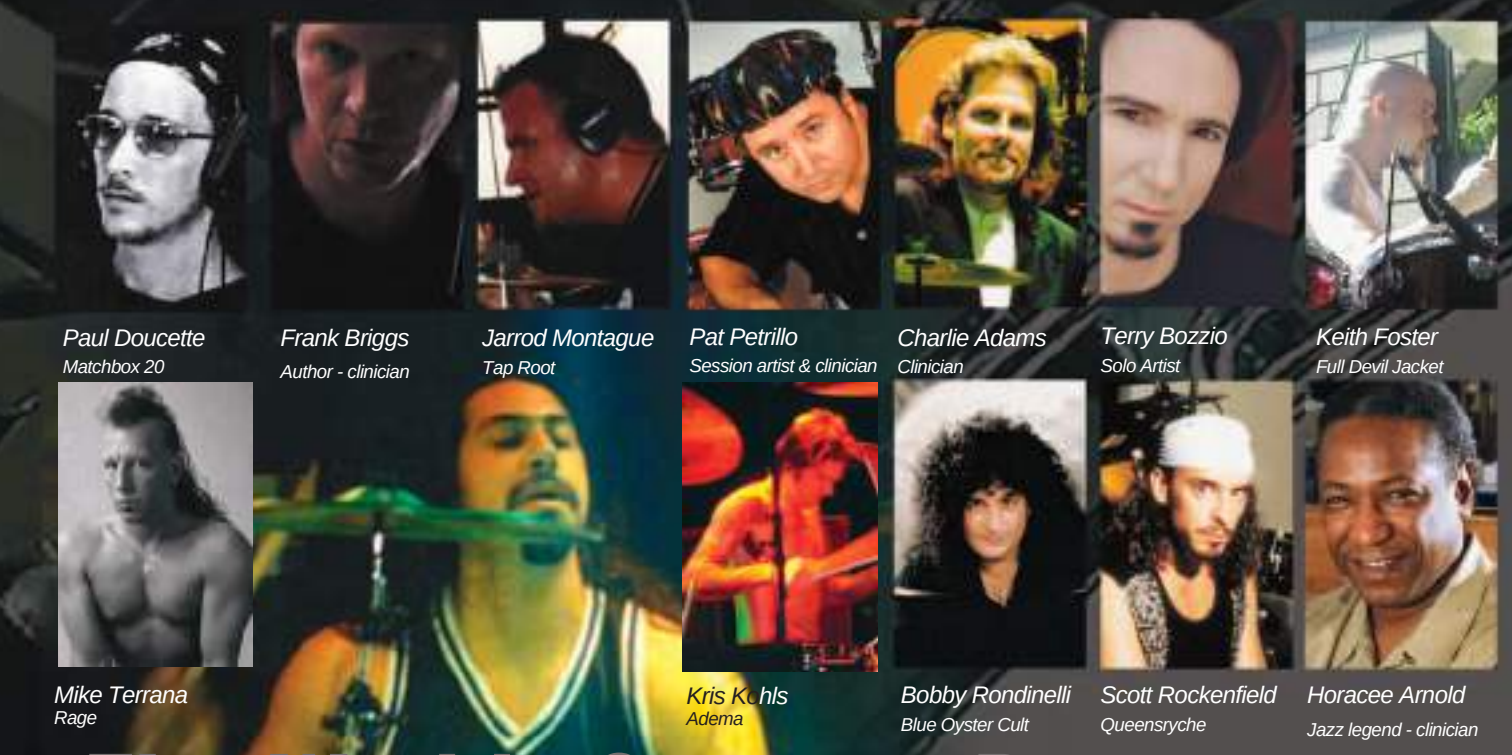
For the tom depths, I again went with my mantra of smaller being better. I also took a chapter from the book of Drum Workshop, who popularized "Fast" drum depths. The theory basically states that a shallower drum will sound better due to the patterns of waves travelling lengthwise through the drum. There are alternate waves that pass through the drum at different speeds, and the more distance these waves have to travel through, the more disjointed and dissonant they become. On a deeper drum, where the depth approaches the diameter, these waves actually duel, dampening much of the drum's natural resonance.

Through years of research, DW has found the best depths associated with each diameter (their Fast depths), and offers them as standard with all of their kits unless the customer specifies otherwise. I decided I'd like to employ this theory, so I decided on an 8" depth for the 10" tom and an 11" depth for the 14" tom. (For more information on Fast sizes, visit www.dwdrums.com.)

Lugs

Lugs can be either cast or machined. Almost all commercial drum suppliers offer their kits with cast lugs—usually made of a zinc alloy called "white metal" that's plated with chrome. Because they are hollow, they are inexpensive to manufacture, since not much material is required to make them. But hollow lugs can lack strength, and the air inside can damp the resonance of the drum.





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Building Your Own Drumset

Machined lugs can offer many advantages over traditional cast lugs. "Machined" implies a lug made of solid metal (usually aluminum, brass, or steel) that has been shaped on a lathe. Their solid nature gives them greater strength and better acoustic qualities. The trade-off, however, is cost. Machined lugs are much more expensive, not only in material, but also to produce. That's why, for the most part, only custom drum manufacturers offer kits with solid machined lugs.

For my kit, I desired the quality and visual appeal of machined lugs. I decided on stainless steel for the material. It offers a great look, with unmatched strength and durability. At first I looked into designing and machining my own lugs from scratch. However, after doing much research and shopping around, I had to compromise and buy lugs. This will be covered to a greater extent later.

Fit And Finish

The first thing to think about when considering a finish for your kit is deciding between lacquer and wrap. Lacquer offers beauty that few wraps can match. It allows the wood grain to show through, and can offer many colorful fades and bursts as well. However, a lacquer finish requires many painstaking application steps, and can be extremely difficult to get even and uniform. Many of the lacquer drums offered by the major manufacturers feature as many as twenty-five coats of stain and lacquer, most of which are applied by hand. (This is reflected in their prices.) The other disadvantage of lacquer is that it can be scratched and dinged more readily than a wrap. And it's not a good idea to take a lacquer kit to a dive bar where it might have beer spilled on it. These are the reasons that I decided to go with a wrap.

I wanted something eye-catching, but that I'd still be happy with in a few years. Many drumsets today have really interesting finishes, but before you spend a lot on a kit with a trendy finish, think about how that finish will look when the novelty wears off. I tried to think of a color that would be catchy yet timeless. The one that came to mind was silver sparkle. It's been around forever, but it still looks cool under stage lights.

Once I'd decided on a flashy finish like silver sparkle, I figured that the lugs should be somewhat understated. So I chose a black anodized look instead of the traditional glossy chrome plating on most of today's lugs.

I figured that black rims would complement the black lugs and give the kit a uniform look. In addition to the traditional chrome rims, black rims are available in a 2.3-mm thickness from most of the major drum suppliers. If *you* decide to go with black, it is important to know that you must order the rims that way. You can't order the cheaper chrome rims and then paint them black; the paint will chip right off. And unless you have access to a commercial powder-coating operation, you can forget that option. It's not something you can do at home.

Now that you've decided exactly what you want, and how you want it to look, you're ready to start. So next month we'll discuss creating a list of the parts you'll need for your kit and where to obtain them. See you then!

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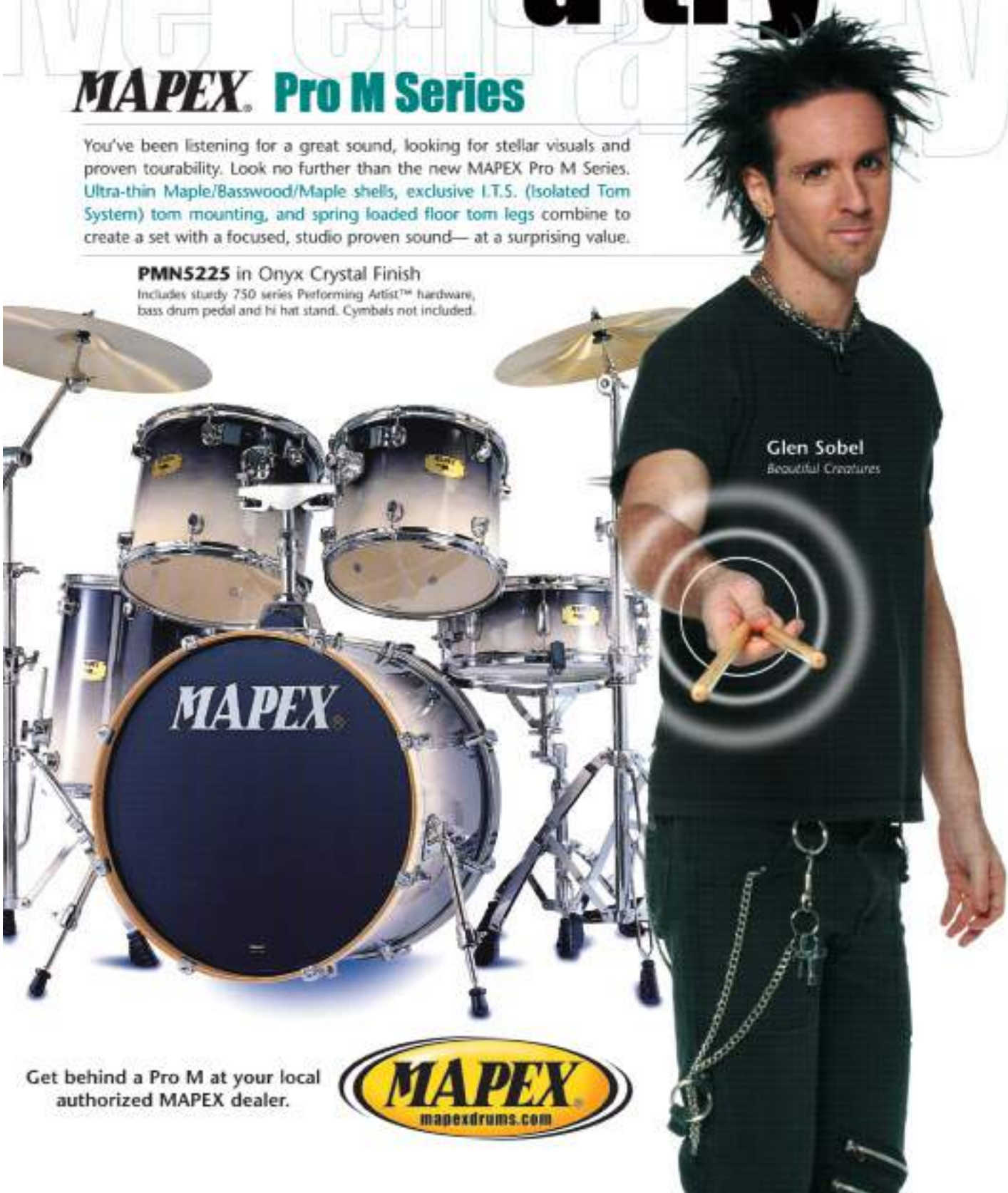

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DCI Multi-Percussion Champ

by Lauren Vogel Weiss

Phil Beale is a twenty-one-year-old junior at Northern Illinois University in DeKalb, Illinois, where he is majoring in music (percussion performance and jazz studies). At the 2001 Drum Corps International World Championships this past August, Phil won the "Best Multi-Percussion" award with the highest percussion solo score of the event (99.30). Phil is a rookie member of the Madison Scouts Drum & Bugle Corps from Madison, Wisconsin, and was also a member of the Scouts' Mixed Ensemble (featuring brass and percussion), who won their title with a score of 92.25. Beale played drumset while his fellow ensemble members played the melodies and harmonies of *Sesame Street*.

Phil's individual solo was an original composition, which he performed on a Yamaha Manu Katché Signature Hipgig Jr. kit. "My solo was based around a quarter-note hi-hat ostinato: a half-open sizzle, followed by a closed choke," describes Phil. "I tried to incorporate a lot of different rhythmic patterns, feels, and time signatures, both in and out of time. At the end, I gave it everything I had to close it with a bang! I hope everyone in the audience enjoyed hearing the solo as much as I enjoyed playing it."

Phil was born in Chicago and grew up in Bloomington. "I've been playing percussion and drumset pretty much my whole life," he says. "My mom sang in the church choir, and the drummer in the choir used to put me on the drumset at rehearsals. I was hooked by the age of two." In high school, Phil played in the marching band, the jazz ensemble, and the All-State Honors Jazz Combo, as well as for musicals, church

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choirs, independent gigs, and, of course, drum corps.

Beale vividly recalls the first drum corps show he witnessed. "I was amazed at corps like the Scouts and the Cavies," he says today. "I decided then and there that I wanted to be a part of that. The next summer I was on the field doing it." In 1997 Phil joined Mirage, a division III corps from Champaign, Illinois. Then he spent two years with Pioneer, from Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Last year was Beale's first with the Madison Scouts. He was originally in the snare line, but he later moved to the pit, where he played drumset and auxiliary percussion.

"Playing drumset with the corps is a lot different from playing with a smaller group," Phil explains. "You have to play with a hundred-and-some-odd people behind you, while thinking about tempos and hits. Depending on the tune we're playing, I'll listen to different sections like the bass drums or the brass—whoever has the melody or the underlying rhythm. Sometimes I watch another member of the pit or the drum major. I have to concentrate at all times."

While growing up, Phil was influenced by his uncle, Michael White, a studio drummer in Los Angeles who has played with Earth, Wind & Fire, David Sanborn, and George Benson, as well as on the recent Grammy-winning Steely Dan album. "Dennis Chambers is one of my biggest idols," he adds. "I also look up to Dave Weckl, Steve Gadd, Vinnie Colaiuta, Jeff 'Tain' Watts, Steve Ferrone, Omar Hakim, Harvey Mason, and Ahmir Thompson, plus up-and-coming drummers like Tony Royster Jr. and Lil' John Roberts. By being so close to Chicago, I also get to hear great gospel drummers, too. And I can't forget all of the great jazz drummers of the 1950s and '60s, like Elvin Jones and Max Roach.

Phil has some advice for young drummers like himself. "Don't get discouraged when you can't play something, or you hear other drummers who sound better than you. Keep working, keep your focus on God, keep your head on right, and don't give up. Practice a lot, and listen to many different kinds of drummers and music. It also helps if you open your mind up to new things. Try to emulate as many cats as possible, and over time you'll develop your own style of playing."

Studying all areas of percussion has definitely helped Phil become a better musician. "I've been able to apply a lot of the things that I've learned playing marimba and piano to the drumset," he explains. "Independence techniques…different rhythmic and ethnic patterns…hearing chord changes and progressions—I've been able to adapt most of them to the drumset." Phil also recommends the school band program or drum corps activity to other young drumset players. "It's a great start. If you start in a smaller corps and work your way up, you'll only get better. You have nothing but time to practice, so you can really improve. It's a great experience."

Phil Beale intends to be a professional drummer, he confides. "I want to tour, do studio work, produce, get lots of endorsements—things like that. I want to do it all!"

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Swag's Ken Coomer

Vintage Nashville Digs

Story by Robin Tolleson • Photos by Rick Malkin

Ken Coomer clearly enjoyed a rare few months off the road last year. It gave him time to set up all the gear he's bought at pawn shops, vintage drum shows, and other places while on tour over the past ten years. "I'll get back to the hotel after a gig at 4:00 in the morning, and wake up all excited about finding a pawn shop. I'll jump in a cab or convince some local person to take me. Just about everything in my studio was bought like that."

Formerly with alternative country pillars Uncle Tupelo and Wilco, Coomer now plays with the mighty Swag, a killer Nashville power-pop band featuring Cheap Trick bassist Tom Petersson. Ken also works with Pinch, a project produced by guitarist Pat Thrall. In addition, he's co-owner of a production company called Close And Play, and proud owner of a 77-year-old house in Nashville's Inglewood district. Ken has converted the second-floor attic into a recording/rehearsal space, Turdy Studios,

and some of the instruments he keeps there are priceless, like a Vox Jaguar organ, a cherry 54-key Fender Rhodes electric piano, and a red, white & blue drumkit that reportedly belonged to Buck Owens' drummer.

A stairway comes into the middle of the room, and the floor space circles around the stairwell. On one side of the space there's an alcove that Coomer uses to store some of his twenty-five-odd drumkits. (Ken says he likes the "cheesy old stuff," the more sparkle or pearl finish the better.) Set up in front of those drums is whatever kit he's currently using for recording.

Ken says he hasn't had to do anything to the walls to make the room sound good; they came fitted with a sort of acoustic tile that disrupts some of the sound waves. "I lucked out getting a house that had this weird shape," he shrugs. "When we put the kit in the alcove, the sound just shoots out. We'll

Old-and-new-world techniques: Swag's Ken Coomer surrounds himself with classic analog tape decks, vintage snares, even an old keyboard bass. But he's not shy about employing digital if it fits. (Ken's mouse pad betrays his true leanings, though.)

put a mic' overhead, and then I'll run another to the tile bathroom downstairs, and it sounds huge. It's amazing what you can do." Coomer adds that he's piggybacked an 18" bass drum to a 26" for recording purposes. "You get the tightness of the 18", and then the 26" is real roomy," he explains.

Ken's music space has proven worthy for rehearsing and recording. "Swag practices up here," he says. "It seems like the drummer always has the practice place. I'd rather have it that way. So what if they dirty a couple of glasses?"

Coomer records many projects onto a vintage Stevens 1" 8-track. "It's the same format as 2" 16-track, and it's super fat," he enthuses. Ken also records in Pro Tools, and uses combinations of old and new. "I never thought I would go the route of Pro Tools or anything like that, but it just makes sense," he figures. "It's user-friendly. And if you don't want it to *sound* like you used Pro Tools, you can run it through some mic' pre's, compressors, and limiters, and dump it back down to analog. That way you get the hiss and the fatness."

Ken gets excited as he points to various items he's stumbled across over the years—some Rupert Neves compressors, a funky Rheem keyboard bass ("The first time I saw one was in the Devo video for 'Whip It.'"), an old drum machine that Ken simultaneously programs a samba and a bolero on ("Welcome to psycho land!"), and a Hammond M-3 that Ken keeps downstairs by the front door. "I didn't have any more room up here," he explains, "and I didn't want to lose friends fast by having them carry it up here."

Coomer says he doesn't have a set routine when working in his music space. "I'll sit downstairs and get and idea, and then come up here and record it. It's a luxury having this setup. I bought an MP3 sampler a year ago and didn't touch it for six months. Technology frightened me. But one day I jumped into it, and it was like, Hey, this is *alright*. Now I'll record something with the kit, and if I don't like the sound relative to the song, I'll go to Pro Tools and pull up Sound Replacer and add anything under the sun. A lot of people think that's cheating, but if you're creating your own sounds, it's all valid to use.

"I think drummers make great producers," Coomer concludes. "It's our role to listen. If you're a good drummer, you have good ears, the same as producers—." Ken abruptly interrupts himself. "Say, isn't there a vintage drum show in Nashville today? If there is, I've got to go. I might find something that I can't live without!"

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The Humble Home Studio

Layin' Down Tracks On A Budget

by Rick Long and Alan Weisman

Over the past few years, nothing short of a revolution has been going on in affordable home recording gear. The average music hobbyist can easily convert a bedroom, basement, or garage into an audio recording studio capable of turning out professional-quality recordings at a fraction of the hourly fees charged by commercial studios. The trick is knowing what you want to do with the studio, finding out what equipment is needed to get that job done, and learning enough about audio engineering to operate that equipment properly.

In this article we'll explore a range of home studio setups, starting with a humble MIDI setup owned by one of the authors of this article, Rick Long. The other author, Alan Weisman, operates a home studio that has more of an audio focus. Studios owned and operated by well-known drummers Joey Heredia and Russ Miller are also included.

Rick's MIDI Studio

Rick Long is a freelance drummer and frequent contributor to *MD*. Since most of his work is in the MIDI arena, Rick doesn't need anything more than the basics. "My computer acts as a self-contained studio," says Rick. "I use Cakewalk Pro Audio to record MIDI sequences and audio from a Creative Live! drive. The Live! drive acts as my audio and MIDI interface, while Cakewalk has all the outboard effects I need built into the software. The Live! drive only has one audio input, but it can accept SPDIF digital input. So I can expand into a digital mixer later down the road."

Rick uses his studio primarily to edit MIDI sequences for use in live music projects. "Let's face it," he says. "It's hard to find gigs that pay enough to hire a large band. If you want to do anything that requires more than four or five musicians, you need MIDI as a way to fill out the sound."

Rick purchases standard MIDI files from Internet-based suppliers, then removes the drum and guitar tracks. He adds a click track that plays only in his earpiece. This is used for the count-in and to help signal the end of long solo sections. "If a song has a long solo section," says Rick, "I program a few 8th notes into the click track to give myself a two-bar warning that the end of the section is coming. That lets me enjoy the music and focus on the groove rather than count measures in my head."

Rick has also taken on professional music production projects with his modest home studio. "By using a software package called Band In A Box, I can generate tracks that work just fine for background music or demo projects. I convert the MIDI tracks into audio files, burn the audio onto a CD, print a label, and I've just completed the project using only my computer."

For the audio, Rick uses the sound module from his Yamaha DTX 2.0 electronic drumkit. This module features full MIDI capabilities and includes the 128 General MIDI format used for most commercial MIDI files. Rick often tells musicians, "If you have a computer, you already have a recording studio. All you need is the software and something one step up from the basic sound card, and you're ready to go." (For more information about Rick's studio setup, visit his Web site at www.glassthunder.com.)

Alan's Audio Studio

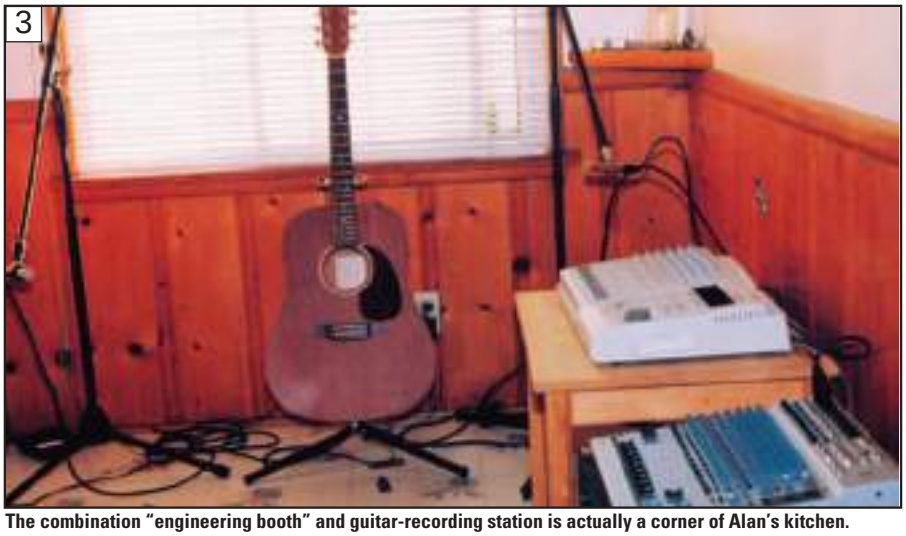
Alan Weisman is an LA-based professional drummer, independent record label owner, and freelance music producer who has created his own modest but well-planned home studio. He began his project by starting with the basics: reasonably priced, high-quality instruments built to last. "Your instruments have to sound great," says Alan. "They also must be expandable,

adaptable, and, most importantly, versatile. If you don't have good instruments, you don't have anything to record when you get your studio up and running."

When it came to buying a professional drumkit, Alan found that congruency of sound and versatility in a DW kit that he fell in love with while sitting in on a gig one night. ("I spent a month convincing the owner to sell it," he says.) In terms of a melodic instrument, Alan's choice is the acoustic guitar, and in keeping with his budget constraints, he shopped until he found a Martin D-15 that was versatile, affordable, and able to handle the tuning ranges he needed. "This 'bare bones' model is simply appointed, but it sounds amazing," says Alan. "This combo of guitar and drums is *my* sound."

The "drum room" for Alan Weisman's home studio is built into a store-bought utility shed installed within Alan's garage. Ventilation has been added.

The foam-lined interior of the shed is compact but comfortable, and sound levels are well contained.



The combination "engineering booth" and guitar-recording station is actually a corner of Alan's kitchen.

Joey Heredia's home studio is more equipped but still "homey." Note the drumkit, tucked into a corner of the room and barely visible in the far right of the photo.

Once Alan had his sound sources ready, he set about designing his home studio. "The drumset is one of the loudest acoustic instruments," he says. "Even when it's played relatively quietly it can still cut through many habitable structures. I live in a duplex with a shared wall and a garage attached to the back of my unit. After spending $700 a year on rehearsal rooms, I figured the money would be better spent by converting the garage into my own rehearsal facility, which could also be used for recording."

At a local home store Alan purchased a 10' x 8' aluminum barn-type shed, 1" plywood flooring, and about 700 square feet of high-density foam insulation for the walls, floor, and ceiling. The foam is 9" thick on the walls and 4" thick on the floor and ceiling. Four ventilation holes, two 12" box fans, 6' of ducting for fresh and exhaust air, two quiet 10" fluorescent lights, and a well-grounded power strip complete this self-enclosed sound room. Total cost: around $1,500.

While earning a degree in recording engineering from New York University, Alan worked as an assistant engineer on eleven albums at GRP Records in New York. "GRP's studio had about as flat a frequency response as you could get," Alan recalls. "It's a wonderful benchmark for how much low end, mids, or highs I need, and how best to adapt to the close-miking techniques I'd be using in my compact studio."

For further reference, Alan strongly recommends Howard Massy's *Behind The Glass: Top Record Producers Tell How They Craft The Hits* (Miller Freeman Books). In it, recording engineers tell how they made those great-sounding recordings we've all heard. Alan considers this the best "how to" book available for the home studio recording engineer.

Alan's main recording hardware consists of an eight-track Fostex hard-disk recording system and a Behringer 2004A mixer.

"Behringer thought of just about everything you'd want in this rack-mountable board," he says. "The 'invisible' preamps were a major factor in my decision, since I didn't want to alter the sounds of any of the signals I was putting into the board."

Alan uses Oktava MC 012-01 condenser mic's for the acoustic guitar and for overheads on the drums. "They have a warm yet crisp sound that gives you the feeling of the performance for only $100 each," he says. Alan purchased a set of four Audix D-Series mic's for use on toms and snares, and a Shure Beta 52 for the kick. All of these mic's are reasonably priced.

Also very reasonably priced was a Lexicon MPX-500 with its versatile programs and flexible parameters. A Fuhrman line conditioner and a Denon DN-C550R recorder/duplicator fill out a portable eight-space rack. Says Alan, "The rack is easily transported from my studio in the garage to my kitchen, with its mixture of tile and hardwood walls. That's where I record vocals, acoustic guitar, and hand percussion."

For monitors, Alan uses speakers that came with a Sony stereo system. "I referenced this system with two Billy Cobham CDs that I was assistant engineer on," he says. "The mixes sounded true and clear, so I didn't feel a need to purchase anything more."

Alan concludes, "With my current gear and home-made recording booth, I can play with headphones and hear all of my drums and cymbals clearly and in balance. This actually turns out to be the best system I've ever had with which to practice the drumset and write drum parts. I can record my performances and hear them back any time—which is naturally humbling. This arrangement is also a wonderful teaching tool. I can record during lessons, and the students can take the CDs home with them for more in-depth study."

Audio Engineering Skills

You can learn more about audio engineering by buying a basic reference book. There are several titles available, including almost two hundred matches that come up when you search Amazon.com using the keywords "audio engineering." For a no-cost alternative, visit the well-designed and informative Web site of the SAE Institute (www.sae.edu) and click on the "reference materials" button. You'll find easy-to-understand guides on how to record everything from drums to vocals, along with information on wiring, studio plans, and sound isolation. There's even a Helmboltz Calculator that helps you build baffles that absorb specific frequencies. Most home studio engineers know to do something about high-frequency reflectivity, but the SAE information helps you create a room where all frequencies have a similar reverberation time.

Stop And Smell The Music

Once you have the basic equipment you need, don't become obsessed with the idea that you need just one more piece of gear to get the sound perfect. There'll always be one more item that you don't have, can't afford, or can't find. It's fine to look into the possibilities that a new piece of gear will give you. But in the meantime, the best thing to do is to follow the advice of Joe Walsh, the former James Gang and Eagles guitarist who also has thirteen solo albums to his credit. When asked for his advice about recording techniques, Joe replied, "Plug in and hit 'record.'" You just might be surprised at what you can already do.

The Pros' Home Studios

Somewhere between Rick Long's PC-based MIDI studio and today's ultra-high-tech commercial facilities is the type of compact but well-equipped recording operation owned by artists like Russ Miller and Joey Heredia.

R.M.I. Music Productions

Russ Miller is well known as a session and touring drummer, a record producer, and an author of instructional books and videos. When he isn't busy recording for artists like Nellie Furtado or Jarvis Church, Russ can be found in his home studio, R.M.I. Music Productions. He uses the studio for personal and professional recording projects, including his most recent CD, *Cymbalism*. He has also used the studio to sample sounds for new Yamaha electronic drum modules, and to record demonstration disks for Yamaha's acoustic drums.

Russ's studio is based on a Yamaha 02R Digital Mixer and a Macintosh G4 Dual Processor running Pro Tools 5.1. The drum booth used to be a pool-equipment shed. A video camera links the drum booth with the main studio room, which is located in a converted den inside the house. For more on Russ's system, visit his Web site at www.russmiller.com.

Joey's Studio

Los Angeles–based freelance drummer Joey Heredia claims that his studio (named simply for himself) has "the best live drum sound this side of hell." Joey's studio is well equipped to handle live recording of multiple musicians. Eight separate headphone mixes are available, making the studio ideal for tracking live sessions such as the new CD by flutist Hubert Laws.

Joey also points out that his studio's location provides a comfortable atmosphere for musicians. Says Joey, "The neighborhood is like being in New York, with restaurants and coffeehouses. If I'm not getting what I envision, we can take a rest for an hour or two to get away and loosen up."

R.M.I. Gear List:

Media:	Pro Tools 5.1, ADAT Fostex RD-8, Emagic Logic Audio 4.7.3 w/EXS 24
Interfaces:	Digidesign 888 X2, Digidesign ADAT bridge, MOTU 2408 MKII, MOTU MIDI Time Piece AV
Console:	Yamaha 02R Version2, Yamaha O1V
Outboard gear:	DBX Compressors 163-166, Lexicon PCM 91, Lexicon LXP15II, TC Electronics Finalizer
Mic Pre-Amps:	API (for drums), Neve 1272, Prosonus M-80, Aphex Tubessence
Yamaha MIDI Gear:	Motif 8, P-80, A-3000 Turbo Sampler, EX-5R, RY30, DTXPRESS, DTXtreme w/DS11 pad kit, Yamaha DTX 2.0, Yamaha RS-7000
Other MIDI Gear:	DrumKAT Turbo
Shure Mic's:	Beta 98s, KSM32s, KSM44s, SM57s, SM81s, VP88, Beta 52s, PCM 91, SM58s
Studio Drumkit:	Yamaha Maple Custom Vintage 8", 10", 12", 13", 14", 16" toms, 20", 22", 24" kicks, various snares
Computers:	Macintosh G4 dual processor, 9 GB tracking drive, Firewire CD-RW, Glymph transport drives, IMAC for MIDI room, Airport networking

Joey's Studio Gear List:

Mixing Console:	Mackie 56x8 recording console, Mackie CR 1604 mixer
Monitors:	KRK V8 self-powered monitors, KRK Rockit monitors
Recorders:	Alesis ADAT XT (4), Alesis Masterlink, Sony DAT deck (DTC-A6), JVC TD-W118 double cassette deck
Mic' Pre Amps:	Presonus MP-20 Two Channel Discrete, Aphex 107 Two Channel Tubessence, ART Single Channel Tube
Audix Mic's:	CX-111 condensers (matched pair), D1, D2s, D3, D4s, ADX-50 condenser
Shure Mic's:	SM57s, SM58, Beta 52
Other Mic's:	AKG C5900 condenser Audio Technica Pro 25 hypercardioid
Headphones:	Sony Stereo MDR-7504s, Sony stereo MDR-7502s, Audio Technica stereo ATH M40s
Headphone Amp:	Q-MIX (six separate mixes) plus two more phone mixes from the console
Power Amp:	Peavey DECA/528
Outboard Gear:	Behringer Composer stereo compressor, Behringer MDX4400 4-channel compressors, Line 6 POD, BBE 882 Sonic Maximizer, Alesis Datadisk
Effects:	Lexicon MPX 100, Roland SDE 1000 digital delay, Alesis Wedge multi-effects unit, Alesis XT digital reverb, Alesis Microverb II
Keyboards & MIDI Equipment:	Yamaha P-150 controller, Roland JV-1010 multitimbral sound module, Roland JX-3P keyboard, Roland D-110 multitimbral sound module, Korg DW-8000 digital waveform keyboard, Alesis D4 stereo drum module, Korg Electribe Rhythm Synthesizer, J.L. Cooper DATA SYNC
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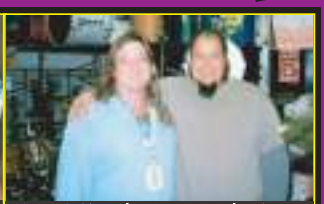

West L.A. Music drum, manager Glenn Noyes with Abe Laboniel Jr. (Sting, Paul McCartney)

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Mykael Lundstedt

Mykael Lundstedt of Beaverton, Oregon has an impressive résumé. He's been active on the West Coast for more than twenty years, recording and doing club work in San Diego, the San Francisco Bay Area, and the Pacific Northwest.

Although his background covers virtually every style of music, Mykael is currently focused on two band projects. Gasoline Kings is a power pop band that recently recorded its first demo CD. Docile is an alt-metal band that showcases Mykael in a heavier setting. (You can check them out at www.docilenoise.com.) Multiple side projects keep Mykael busy with several gigs per week in Seattle and Vancouver, and he's an in-demand session player in the Portland studios.

For performing live, Mykael employs a Premier Signia kit with Tama and Allegra snare drums. For recording he turns to a vintage '63 Gretsch round-badge kit. He uses a combination of Sabian, Zildjian, and Paiste cymbals, Alesis, drumKAT, and Roland electronics, and LP, Toca, and Remo percussion.

"After twenty-three years of playing, I've learned what makes a successful rhythm section," says Mykael. "I specialize in rhythms and making them feel right to support the goal of the songs. I use my knowledge and my sense of innovation to get the groove. I'm able to play acoustic, electronic, or hand percussion—whatever is needed for the song to succeed. I've enjoyed a good career in the business so far, but I'm actively looking to better my situation."

Paul Czech

Paul Czech is a thirty-two-year-old drummer/songwriter from Canton, Ohio. He's currently performing in two bands regularly throughout the northeastern US.

Paul's first band, New Wave Nation, is a tribute act specializing in the music of the early 1980s MTV era. Their performances are fully produced with video sequences, choreography, and costumes. (Check them out at www.newwavenation.com.)

In a sharp contrast, Paul's other project, Progdog, is a quartet devoted to "innovative and energetic original music." Paul is the chief composer for the band, with songwriting influences including The Smiths, Foo Fighters, Rush, King's X, and The Beatles. (Go to www.theprogdog.com to hear them.)

Progdog's CD displays Paul's feel for progressive music, with a combination of chops and imagination that reflects influences such as Stewart Copeland, Jerry Gaskill, Chad Wackerman, and Dave Grohl. He performs on a Pearl Masters Custom kit with Zildjian and Sabian cymbals.

Mark Evans

Mark Evans began drum lessons at the age of seven, inspired by seeing Buddy Rich on an *I Love Lucy* episode. As he grew up, he was influenced by the work of drummers like Buddy, Gene Krupa, Carl Palmer, Keith Moon, and John Bonham.

After studying music at Western Michigan University, Mark became involved in the progressive music scene. His first major group, Hanover Fist, was picked up by Gene Simmons' record label. That group evolved into a band called Tiles, which produced three CDs, including the Magna Carta release *Presents Of Mind*.

In 1997 Mark joined House Of Usher, another progressive group, whose 1998 *Body Of Mind* CD received acclaim from the international prog-music press. A live album recorded at an international prog-rock festival in 1999 was released this year, and Mark has just finished drum tracks for the group's next studio release. Watch for it on www.houseofusher.com. When not recording or touring with HOU, Mark teaches over thirty students per week.

In somewhat of a departure for a prog-rock drummer, Mark performs on a restored 1938 Slingerland Radio King kit, with Zildjian cymbals. He plays and endorses Aquarian heads and accessories, and states his goals simply: "To continue learning my instrument and performing great music."

If you'd like to appear in *On The Move*, send us an audio or video cassette of your best work (preferably both solo and with a band) on three or four songs, along with a brief bio sketch and a high-quality color or black & white close-up photo. (Polaroids are not acceptable. Photos will not be paid for or credited.) The bio sketch should include your full name and age, along with your playing style(s), influences, current playing situation (band, recording project, freelance artist, etc.), how often and where you are playing, and what your goals are (recording artist, session player, local career player, etc.). Include any special items of interest pertaining to what you do and how you do it, and a list of the equipment you use regularly. Send your material to On The Move, Modern Drummer Publications, 12 Old Bridge Road, Cedar Grove, NJ 07009. Material **cannot** be returned, so please **do not** send original tapes or photos.

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¡Caliente! Hot Latin Jazzers

An exciting new wave of drummers armed with tradition and forward-thinking, genre-blending styles makes its mark—and takes no prisoners.

by Ken Micallef

It began with Cuban percussion star Chano Pozo jamming with Dizzy Gillespie's Afro-Cuban Jazz Orchestra in 1947. Later, rhythmic influences from Brazil, Cuba, and Mexico influenced American music in myriad ways, infiltrating styles as diverse as jazz, easy listening, funk, and prog rock. Today, popular music is perhaps as informed by Latin styles as much as it's ever been.

As drummers, we tend to concentrate on the names of note in our particular generation, whether it be current fave Horacio "El Negro" Hernandez, Alejandro "Alex" Acuña and Airto Moriera in the '70s, Dom Um Romao and Claudio Slon in the '60s, or all the way back to the celebrated Mr. Pozo. But things change.

With an ever-shrinking world, where Steve Gadd, Tony Williams, and Elvin Jones are as well known in Central and South America as in the US, a new generation of south-of-the-border drummers are melting, mixing, and refrying American sounds into a style all their own. Making their mark on the American music scene, and not a second too soon, these brave new rhythmatists—Mexico's Antonio Sanchez, Cuba's Dafnis Prieto, and Brazil's Vera Figueiredo—work with some of the biggest names in jazz, bringing blazing technique grounded in tradition to bear on forward-thinking sensibilities. This is not your father's Latin jazz, but the sound of world music gate-crashing America with a potent blast of chops-heavy heat and artistic fury.

Berklee magna cum laude graduate **Antonio Sanchez** is, as current employer Pat Metheny puts it, a drum monster in the lineage of Jack DeJohnette and Roy Haynes. "When you have a drummer that has his degree of flexibility and maturity," says Metheny of Sanchez's performance on his latest record, *Speaking Of Now*, "it's a rare thing. The way that Antonio is able to shift between all the potential rhythmic modulations in a piece is profound. He is a real rhythmic improvisor. The drum soloists that I have used a lot, Bill Stewart, Roy Haynes, Jack DeJohnette—Antonio is on that level. He is incapable of doing the wrong thing in terms of dynamics or balance, almost to a fault. It's inspiring to see a drummer who can make microsecond decisions that are as effective as his are, and yet makes every one else sound their best."

Antonio Sanchez

Alex Solca

With that kind of praise it's no surprise that Sanchez has appeared on records by Avishai Cohen (*Unity*), Danilo Perez (*Motherland*), David Sanchez (*Travesia*), and Miguel Zenon (*Looking Forward*), as well as with Metheny. The grandson of Mexico's greatest living

Dafnis Prieto

Paul La Raia

film and stage star, Antonio Sanchez is entering the building, his own ascension assured.

Dafnis Prieto is a graduate of the National School of Music in Havana—and of gigs and records with Dave mara Eddie Palmieri, Jane Bunnett, and Herbie Hancock. The twenty-seven-year-old has the small frame of a soccer player, but displays the dexterity and fire of a ballet dancer turned heavyweight boxer.

At a recent gig at NYC's Jazz Gallery with his own group, Prieto played complex Cuban figures over simmering montunos and under boiling solos. Often he telegraphed compositional changes with aggressive fills that cut across the music like a flamethrower. Not only does Prieto workout through danzon, rhumba, clave, son, and mozambique rhythms, his jazz playing is exceptional (DD Jackson's *Sigame*). Ditto for his more free drumming with stalwart Henry Threadgill (*Up Popped Two Lips*). And his own compositions form the basis of a coming recording debut as a leader. Prieto is a Cuban fireball with more than cigars in his future.

Brazilian **Vera Figueiredo** is a drummer, composer, and the owner/director of an important drum school, the Instituto de Bateria Vera Figueiredo. Through the school, Vera produces the annual Batuka! music festival and national drumming contest. Meanwhile, her busy itinerary includes work with Brazilian heavyweights like Toninho Horta,

Vera Figueiredo

Hermeto Pascoal, João Donato, and Eliane Elias. Vera also founded the female instrumental group Kali.

In addition to her many instructional videos (available at www.verafigueiredo.com.br/veraing.htm), the drummer has toured the world conducting clinics with Virgil Donati. She's also brought her brand of Brazilian jazz to LA's Baked Potato and Troubadour clubs. Vera's credits are too long to list here, but her most recent recording, *Vera Cruz Island*, features not only Brazilian musicians, but the talents of Dennis Chambers, Virgil Donati, and Dave Weckl alongside her own blazing kit work.

American jazz has been in need of a transfusion for years, and as always, the blood flow begins and often ends with the drummers. Here's to the new doctors of rhythm, hot Latin savants whose innovation and artistic integrity is their guide.

Antonio Sanchez

Synthesis On The Scene

Alex Solca

On Pat Metheny's *Speaking Of Now*, thirty-year-old Antonio Sanchez solos over complex metric modulation sections, adapts to Metheny's "million cymbals" approach, burns on high-flying space bop, and even plays a left-foot clave pattern under yet another thunderous drum solo.

The Metheny gig is a dream come true for Sanchez, who just a few years ago wondered if his Berklee education would suddenly end when his native Mexican peso dropped in value, almost quadrupling his mother's credit card balance, which is what paid for his schooling. But many albums and road miles later, Sanchez has paid back his mom and put her fears to rest.

Sanchez is a drummer who boils and burns at very low volume and sticking levels. His gritty bop drumming recalls a young Jack DeJohnette. Truly a world drummer, Antonio has immersed himself in Cuban, Mexican, Venezuelan, and Brazilian styles, as well as rock and jazz. As much a fan of Vinnie Colaiuta and Jack DeJohnette as John Bonham and Stewart Copeland, Sanchez's sound is one of grace, power, and synthesis.

MD: The new breed of south-of-the-US-border drummer plays jazz as well as native rhythms.

Antonio: Mexico City is a melting pot of tons of different kinds of music. At one point, I had an identity crisis because I didn't know what was my thing. The Cubans have their thing, and it is *so* strong. The Brazilians, the Venezuelans, the Argentineans, they all have that specific folk thing. Mexican tradition is a little harder to get a hold of.

I thought, If I'm not going to do one thing extremely well, I want to be able to

"I had an identity crisis because I didn't know what was my thing. The Cubans have their thing, and it is so strong. But Mexican tradition is a little harder to get a hold of."

Alex Solca

do everything well. I began researching tons of Cuban and Brazilian music and straight-ahead. I realized that if I can do a hybrid of many styles, then if there is a gig that requires that, I'll have a better chance.

MD: So what *do* you bring to the gig?

Antonio: Versatility. To be able to swing and play the traditional stuff, to play the traditional stuff in a very open and jazz-oriented way. The gigs I've done with Paquito D'Rivera, David Sanchez, Danilo Perez, and Avishai Cohen require musicians who know a lot of trad music but who can swing and open things up. There are people who play traditional Afro-Cuban, Puerto Rican, Venezuelan, or Brazilian stuff very well, but it's very traditional. When you play with people like John Patitucci, he wants to play the rhythms in a traditional fashion, but also be able to approach it in a jazz way, so something can happen improvisationally. That's my forte, to know the tradition really well, but I can also open it up.

MD: What is Mexican tradition?

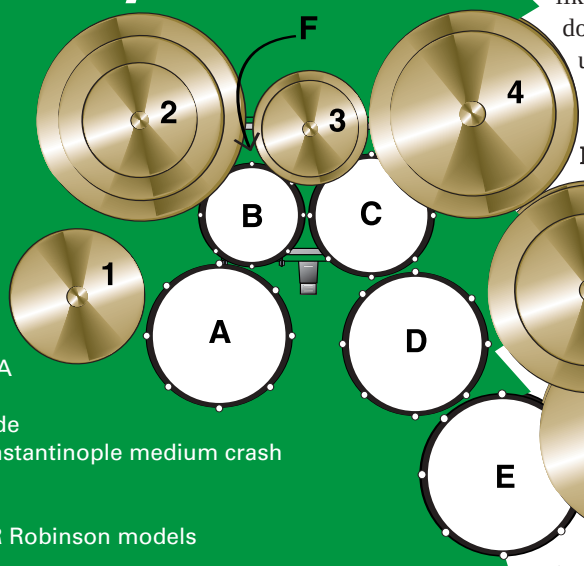
Antonio: It depends on the region. In Veracruz in the Gulf of Mexico, because

Antonio's Metheny Kit

Drums: Yamaha Maple Absolute
- **A.** 5x14 snare
- **B.** 8x10 tom
- **C.** 8x12 tom
- **D.** 14x14 floor tom
- **E.** 16x16 floor tom
- **F.** 16x20 bass drum

Cymbals: Zildjian
1. 14" K Constantinople hi-hats
2. 12" A Custom splash/18" A Custom crash/A Custom 22" flat ride
3. 8" A Custom splash (upside down)/12" A Custom crash
4. 18" K Dark crash/22" A Custom flat ride
5. 16" K Constantinople crash/22" K Constantinople medium crash
6. 22" Swish with eight rivets

Sticks: Zildjian Dennis Chambers and JR Robinson models



it is so close to the Caribbean, people speak with a very heavy Caribbean accent, which is completely different from the city or the north. Their music is like that too. It is very 3/4- and 6/8-oriented, which is an African thing. Another style in that area is called huapango, which is a very intricate 6/8 feel.

If you go to the north, we have the ranchero, a more downbeat-oriented groove. It's like if you go to Puerto Rico, they have bomba and plana. Bomba is very African, 6/8-oriented. Plana is more 4/4, downbeat-oriented. It's easier for people to dance to. In that way it's like the merengue, which is very downbeat-oriented. Salsa is more upbeat. It's trickier for people to dance to. Those are the equivalent to Mexican rhythms.

MD: Who has influenced your drumming?

Antonio: I grew up on Chick Corea's Elektric Band with Dave Weckl, and Frank Zappa and Alan Holdsworth with Vinnie Colaiuta. But after a while that sound became dated to me. With the revival of acoustic music, I changed my sound to reflect that. I changed the way I played, I changed my cymbals, I changed the drums. Danilo and David Sanchez are completely acoustic. I really wanted to get a jazz sound. Pat's gig is the first

continued on page 138

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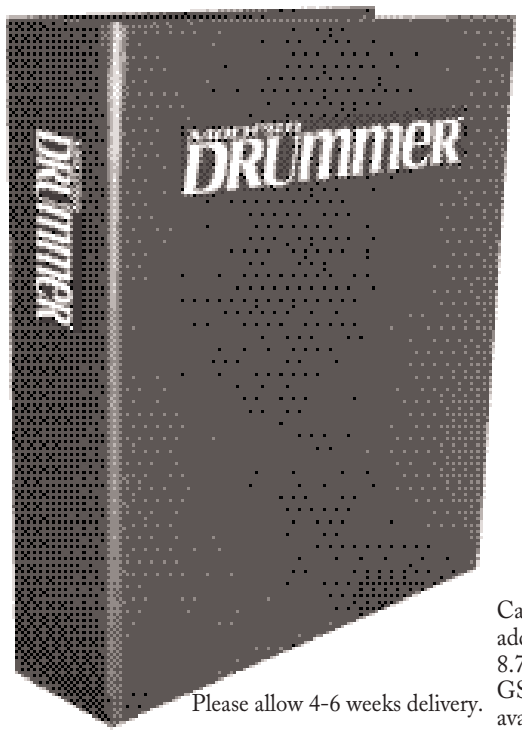

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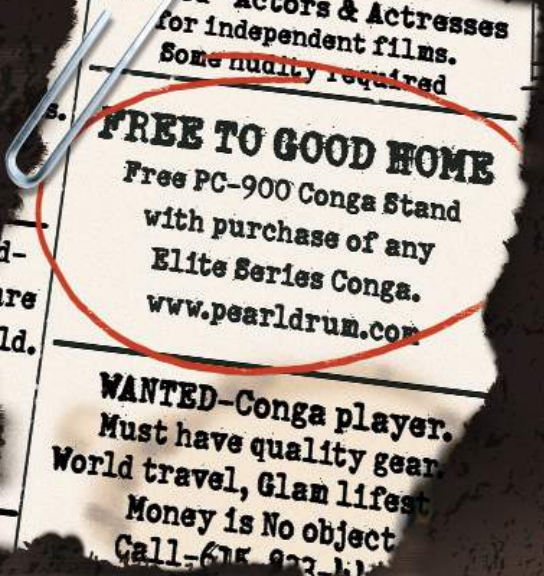

Check out Richie Flores (shown here), Robert Vilera and Robbie Ameen playing Pearl Percussion at various Performances including the 2002 Modern Drummer Festival.

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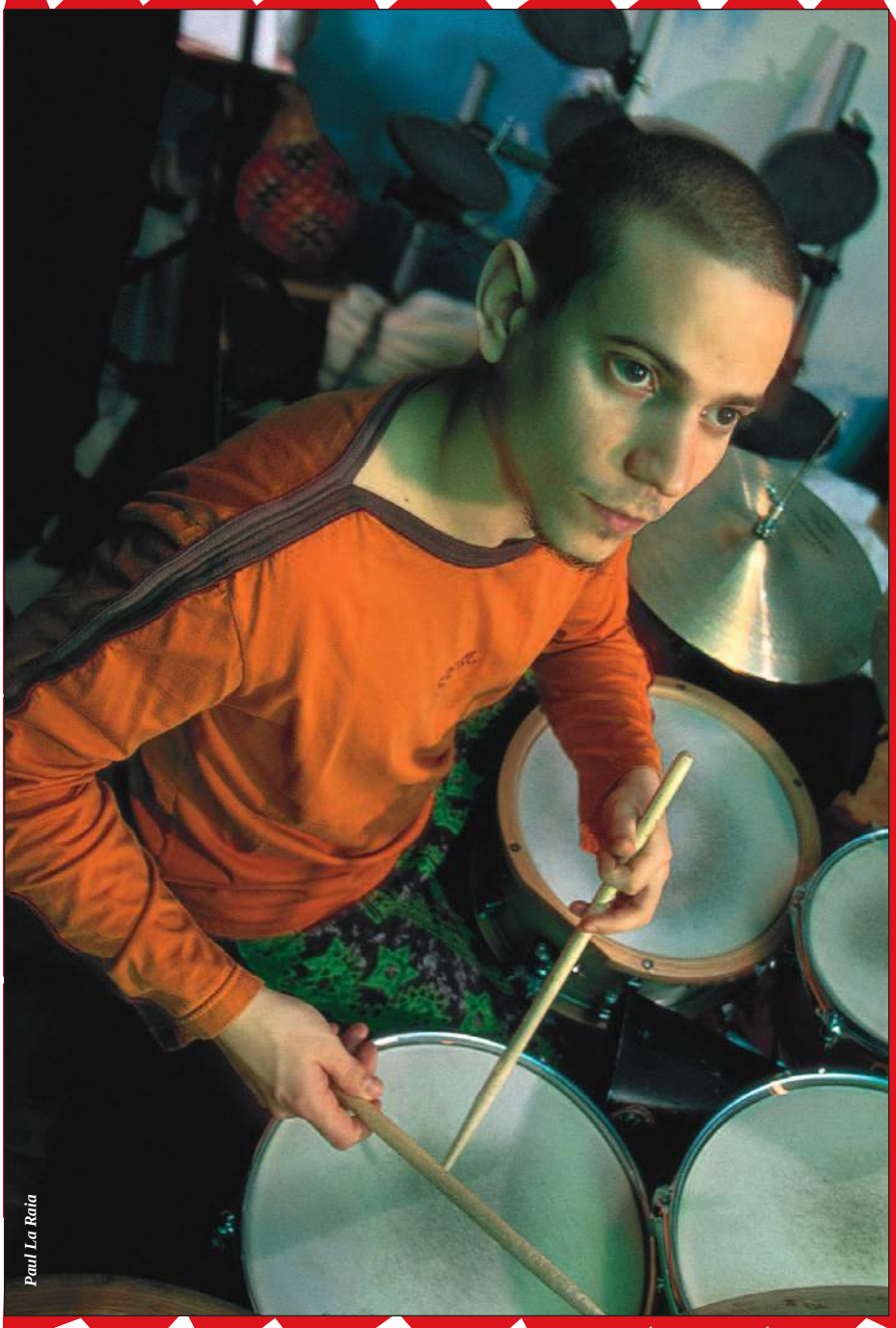
Dafnis Prieto

Supercharging Afro-Cuban Rhythms

By the late 1990s, Latin jazz in New York City was ready to leap ahead, and Dafnis Prieto was there to encourage and foster the change. Since his arrival, Prieto has played in fifteen different groups, firing everyone and everything he plays with intensity, precision, and complex Cuban patterns.

The germ of Prieto's drumming is his merging of various Afro-Cuban percussion sounds—from ancient religious rhythms to avant-garde to straight-ahead jazz. His drumming is often nothing short of remarkable, the kind of startling performance that makes other drummers both exuberant and miserable. The accents he disperses in his patterns are like tornados, intensely blowing across the music like a force of nature.



Paul La Raia

Prieto studied classical percussion at a conservatory in his hometown of Santa Clara before moving to Havana, where he attended the National School of Music. There he took on classical studies while learning to play jazz with a local band. But his first instrument was conga.

Now Prieto busily works in and out of NYC. He's played with Henry Threadgill, who's one of the founding fathers of avant-garde jazz, as well as sensual Brazilian vocalist Claudia Acuña, dynamic pianist DD Jackson, cross-cultural saxophonist Jane Bunnett, and Eddie Palmieri's Afro-Latin Jazz Orchestra. Most recently Prieto performed with Herbie Hancock at a UN-sponsored event, plus gigs with downtown scenesters like trumpeters Brian Lynch and Roy Hargrove, and saxophonist Steve Coleman.

MD: You play Cuban rhythms *and* you swing like mad. How did you get both styles together?

Dafnis: I tried to catch what I think is the essence of each rhythm. I don't know specific patterns in samba, but I can play samba patterns with a good feel. I never had a teacher for trapset. But I've studied Elvin Jones, Tony Williams, Max Roach—*all* the classic guys. I heard them and I felt sensitive to that vibe. Even when I play swing, I'll mix it up when I think it needs that overseas feel. The language can change, and you can decide which one you want to speak in.

MD: How did you evolve to where you

play the rhythms in such layers?

Dafnis: I try to make things intuitive. After I acquire the knowledge, I let it flow. I've studied African beats. They're a little different from what we have in Cuba. They have different accents. If there's a certain kind of rhythm that you're used to hearing a certain way, I'll change the accents, maybe placing emphasis on the weak part of the rhythm. That surprises people.

MD: I saw a Chano Pozo CD in your collection, and I know you're into Elvin Jones and Steve Gadd. But some of your single-stroke rolls sound like Buddy Rich.

Dafnis: With Chano Pozo, the people in Cuba don't really realize what he's done. I learned a lot from him. Of course, I love Buddy Rich, and Steve Gadd too. When I was in Cuba I had one tape of Steve, Chick Corea's *Friends* album. I learned a lot from that as far as how he approaches the drums. He's a really musical guy. I approach my drumming in that way. As for Elvin, he has that loose kind of rhythmic thing that is just amazing.

MD: Is the pattern that Steve Gadd played on Paul Simon's "Late In The Evening" a correct mozambique?

Dafnis: That is a Gadd mozambique, and he says in his educational video that he's not trying to imitate a Latin mozambique. He's just feeling what they did and adding his approach. The mozambique has the clave, the first conga part (sings the part while clapping the clave), which is four bars long. The second conga part is something else. There is a contrast. And the cowbell too. I try to play the rhythms, with those conga and cowbell melodies in mind.

MD: You play the clave on the right hand and break up the conga rhythms between the bass and snare drum?

Dafnis: Yes, and the hi-hat is mostly

"When I play swing, I'll mix it up when I think it needs that 'overseas' feel. The language can change, and you can decide which language you want to speak in."

straight four. Those rhythms are very complex. Then I start playing all those hits and variations. But musicians need the earth. Somebody needs the "1" somewhere!

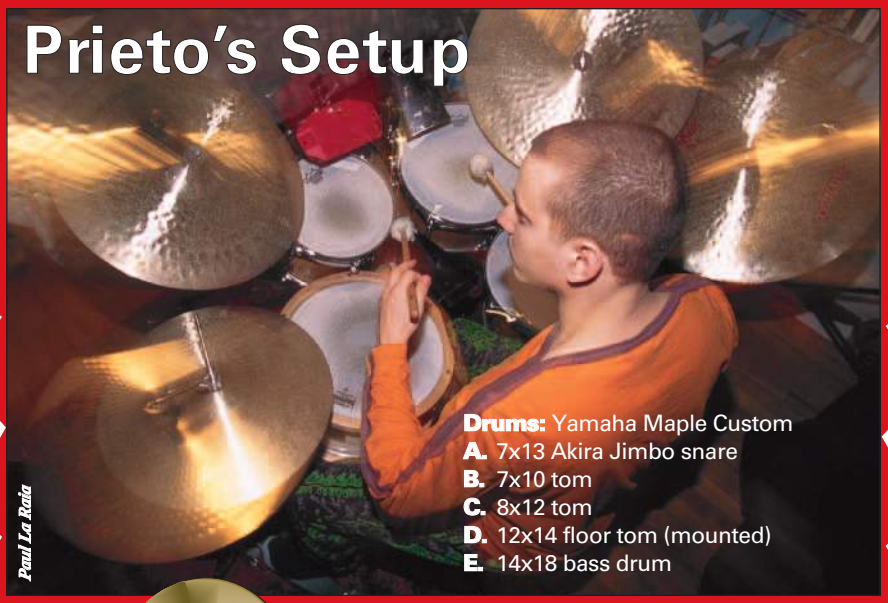
MD: Where does your aggression come from?

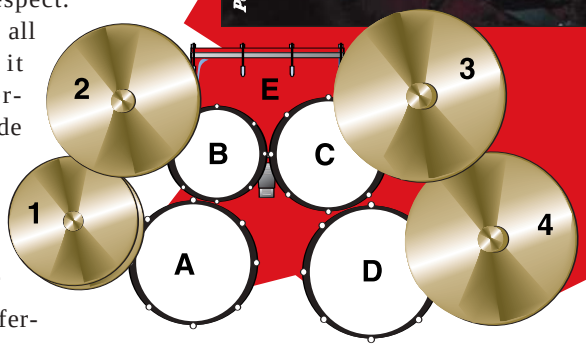
Dafnis: When I get enthusiastic I like to keep going. Elvin Jones helped me a lot to think, Yeah, that could be okay! At his age, he has that energy. I couldn't believe it when I saw him play.

MD: With Henry Threadgill you change gears and play more freely.

Dafnis: Each music has a style and attitude that you have to respect. With Henry's music, it's all written out. For me it doesn't make any difference. I can do avant-garde with Henry or really intense Latin with Eddie Palmieri. But I don't assume I can play the same way with both of them. The attitude is different.

Prieto's Setup





Cymbals: Zildjian
1. 15" hi-hats (Cie top, Mastersound bottom)
2. 18" K Constantinople crash
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4. 20" Oriental Crash Of Doom

Sticks: Zildjian 7A

continued on page 138

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Vera Figueiredo

Brazilian Style, Fusion Sounds

Vera Figueiredo's grasp of Brazilian drumming and its roots and traditions is nearly without parallel. But when she crosses it with US fusion, it's a revelation. Her third album as a leader, *Vera Cruz Island*, is a highly musical outing, featuring an array of talent, as well as a few guest hotshot drummers (Dave Weckl, Dennis Chambers, and Virgil Donati) from north of the border. Vera covers an array of styles heavily informed by the music of Weckl and Chick Corea's Elektric Band. But Vera is no clone. She is very much her own woman.

MD: Your drumming is so powerful and full of tradition. Can you tell me the different rhythms you're playing on the CD?

Vera: My country is huge, therefore it has a great variety of rhythms. Even *living* in Brazil, I have a lot of research to do. I think it's very important to redeem our culture's values because most of the time they get lost over the years. Rhythms and melodies happen naturally, as do my compositions, which are always motivated by some kind of feeling.

The tune "Vera Cruz Island" is based on the maracatu groove. It's not like a clave. The clave completes the maracatu, and you can always feel its presence. On "Terere," I imagined it as a samba-reggae, a mixture of samba baiano (from Bahia) and the reggae section sung in English. It starts in 4/4, with an ostinato pattern with a Brazilian tamborim, bass drum, and Brazilian surdo drum accenting the second and forth beats.

"Devegar" is samba jazz. There's also an Afro-Cuban drum played in 4/4 but intended to sound 6/8. "Double V" was composed over the traditional baião. The exposition of this rhythm is played in a tribal and progressive way. "Reverse" is a

choro, a kind of melancholy music, with a powerful improvisation vibe that is closer to jazz. "Chamamé" is a southern rhythm from the border of Brazil with Argentina.

I thought of Afro-Cuban music when I wrote "Mr. Banana," which is in 6/8. It changes to 4/4 in a tribal section, and then returns to 6/8. "Figão's House" is a mixture of samba and funk. And "Dave" is a rock fusion baião in 4/4 but founded in 2/4.

MD: What records do you recommend listening to in order to learn Brazilian drumming?

Vera: For me, the records that show the best of Brazilian rhythms are Daniela Mercury's *O Canto Da Cidade, Música De Rua, Feijão Com Arroz, Elétrica*, and *Sol Da Liberdade*, Lenine e Marcos Suzano's *Olho De Peixe*, Renato Borghetti's *As Vinte Melhores De Renato Borghetti*, and Chico Science & Nação Zumbi's *Da Lama Ao Caos*. For samba and new bossa era albums, listen to Milton Banana Trio's *Balançando*, Edison Machado's *É Samba Novo*, and Zimbo Trio's *35 Anos* (live).

MD: How did you approach recording and drumming with Weckl, Donati, and Chambers? Were you at all nervous, or did you set out to kick their ass?

Vera: I first met Dave Weckl in São Paulo when he was touring with Mike Stern. My institute organized two clinics with Dave and Mike. After that, in 1999, I invited Dave to open the Batuka Festival. I happened to mention that I was recording my third album, and I invited him to participate. We had to record separately because there wasn't enough room for two drumkits in the studio.

I was overtaken by emotion watching Dave perform through the studio glass. I could feel God's presence right there. I cried a lot and thanked Him for this blessing. Dave is such a musical drummer, and he showed so much respect for me. He ended up staying at my home instead of the hotel to complete his tracks. My mother prepared a wonderful meal for us, and everybody present was sharing that magical moment.

I had never heard of Virgil

"My country is huge, therefore it has a great variety of rhythms. Even living in Brazil, I have a lot of research to do."

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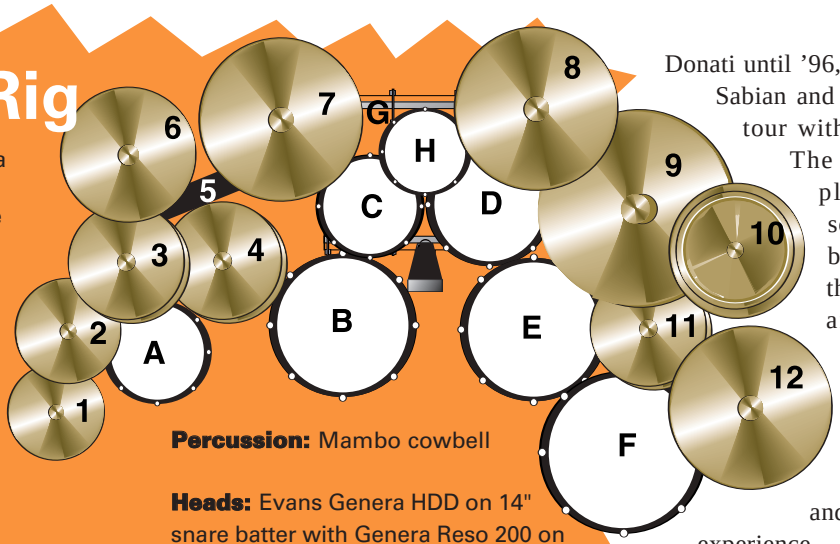
Vera's Rig



Drums: Premier Genista
- **A.** 6x10 soprano snare
- **B.** 5½x14 Signia snare
- **C.** 8x10 tom
- **D.** 8x12 tom
- **E.** 10x14 tom
- **F.** 16x16 floor tom
- **G.** 16x22 bass drum
- **H.** 8" Brazilian tamborim

Cymbals: Sabian
1. 8" disc
2. 10" HH China Kang
3. 12" VFX Distortion hats
4. 13" HH bright hats
5. VFX V-Wave
6. 14" VFX mini ride
7. 17" HH thin crash
8. 15" HH extra-thin crash
9. 21" Will Calhoun Lunar ride
10. Low Max Stax (12" China Kang on top of 14" crash)
11. 12" VFX mini hats
12. 17" HH Sound Control crash with Pro-Mark Rattler

Percussion: Mambo cowbell

Heads: Evans Genera HDD on 14" snare batter with Genera Reso 200 on bottom, Uno 58 1000 on 10" snare batter with Uno Reso 58 on bottom, Genera G2 coated on tom batters with Genera Reso Uno 58 on bottoms, EQ4 on bass drum batter with EQ3 Reso on front

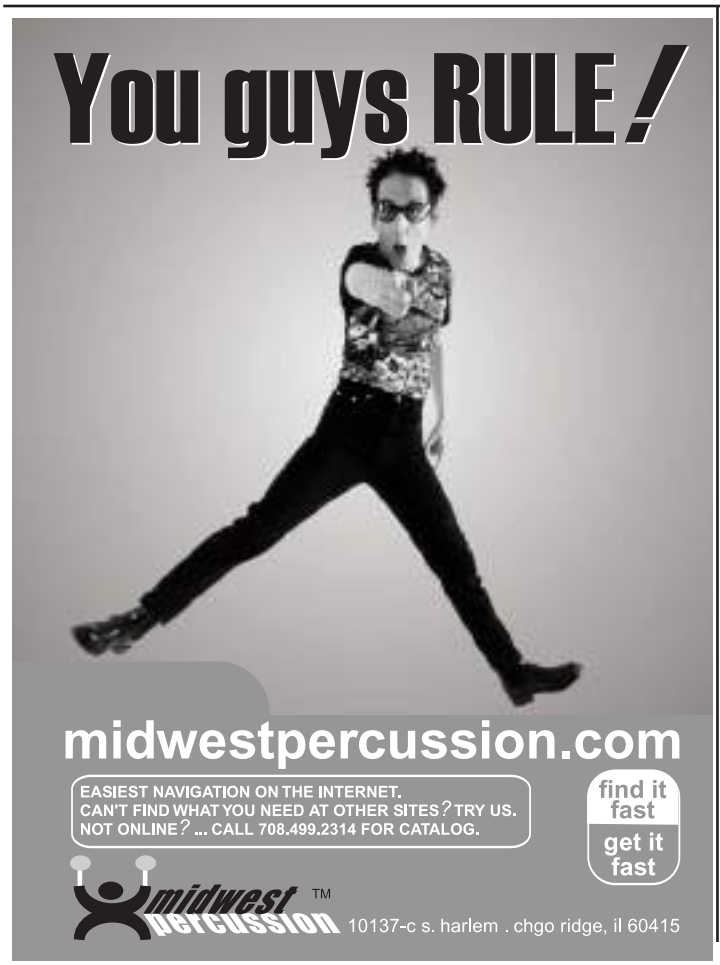
Sticks: Vic Firth Vera Figueiredo signature model

Mic's: Audix

Donati until '96, when I was invited by Sabian and Premier to do a clinic tour with him around the UK. The first time I saw him play was at the first soundcheck. I couldn't believe my eyes. I thought, "What the hell am I doing here?" During the tour the organizers suggested that we should play together. I shivered. But I closed my eyes and went for it. What an experience.

At that time I was starting work on my album, and his participation happened naturally. In fact, I thought of his way of playing when I composed the tune "Double V." Amazing things happened when he recorded the track. Then he asked to turn the lights off when we listened back to the track, and to my extreme happiness he started dancing! I touched him with my music.

continued on page 138



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Antonio Sanchez
continued from page 128

gig where I've used slightly bigger drums. The music is so powerful, I need that extra dimension in the drums.

MD: How do you mix all the styles you play?

Antonio: When you've played so many different styles of music, everything becomes part of your palette. Then you're able to draw on different influences unconsciously. I just play what I hear. On Pat's album, there's one tune, "On Her Way," which has this outro where we're going nuts and I'm playing a backbeat. When I listened back I realized it was like Stewart Copeland.

MD: How did you learn to play with such intensity at a low volume?

Antonio: If you heard me six years ago you would laugh because I was playing so much stuff. I had a lot of chops when I was practicing so much. I wanted to use them all the time. Then people started kicking my ass when I started working. Especially when I started playing with Danilo. We would play without monitors and it would be really hard for me to control my volume. I started experimenting with leaving a lot of space. That started feeling really refreshing to me.

MD: How do you play so close to the drumhead for that gritty, Jack DeJohnette sound?

Antonio: I try to get the most sound out of the drum with the least effort. In Pat's very hard-hitting tunes, I change sticks, from the Zildjian Dennis Chambers model to JR Robinsons. I used to play rock as a kid, but when I got to the States I would play tiny clubs that would require me to bring it down. So you start finding techniques to get a nice sound without hitting so hard. I brought all the drums closer together, each cymbal and drum as close as possible so my sticks have to travel the shortest distance.

MD: How does one learn to play the clave with the left foot?

Antonio: First, get the feet working together. Play clave with the left foot and then add a basic tumbao pattern on the bass drum, which is the pattern that the bass plays on Afro-Cuban music. Once you get the clave motion happening with your left foot, you see where the hits of the clave fall with the bass drum.

It also depends what clave you're working on—2/3, 3/2, rhumba, or son. It takes a lot of work. Once you get the feet going, play an ostinato with the right hand, which would be cascara, what timbale players play on the shell of the drum. I'd recommend checking out Ed Uribe's books on the topic. They are excellent.

MD: What's your goal as a musician?

Antonio: I once read an excellent *Modern Drummer* interview with Adam Nussbaum where he talked about his musical philosophy. He said his order is God, then music, then me. I love that. I'm not religious, but I would say that the music is first, then me. Whatever I can do to make the music feel as good as it can feel, then I'm happy. If that means compromising all the stuff that I can play, then fine. I don't want to destroy a tune because of my ego.

Dafnis Prieto
continued from page 132

MD: How do you approach playing solo with your wife, who is a dancer?

Dafnis: You can play a bottom, supportive rhythm for the dance, or you can play "on top," mirroring the movement. I used to watch her and imitate her movements on the drums. But you have to be careful, because I don't want what I'm playing to sound too abstract so that it misses the point.

That kind of situation is intense work for me, and I forget that I'm playing drums. I really have to focus. And I love that situation where you have to make a different kind of sound.

MD: How would you contrast your drumming with El Negro's?

Dafnis: Besides his left-foot-clave thing, I have a different background in terms of playing an avant-garde approach. And I don't think he composes his own music. In my composing, I'm trying to play danzon and Latin rhythms, but with a different kind of harmony, which I got from playing with Andrew Hill and Henry Threadgill. My goal is to make one sound with all of these different influences, combining them together into something unique.

Vera Figueiredo
continued from page 136

As for Dennis Chambers, he's a real sweetheart. We met once at Expo Music in São Paulo. He invited me to jam with him and Walfredo Reyes on timbales. Then my institute produced a clinic and master class with him in '99.

The day Dennis and I recorded "Figão's House" was very relaxed, a wonderful environment. We were listening to music and I was showing him the map of the music I had written in 4/4, thinking it would be easier for him to understand. Suddenly we started to laugh. We realized he was feeling the song in 4/4 and I was feeling it in 2/4! From there the exchange of information happened. Of course, later on we discussed the music's pulse. The entire experience was a real joy for me and my music.

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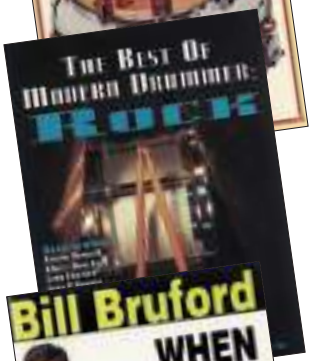

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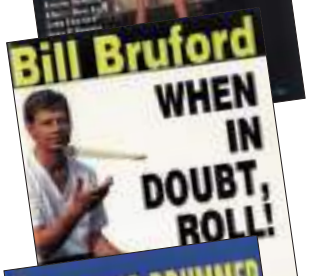

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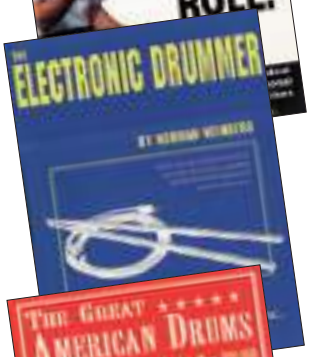

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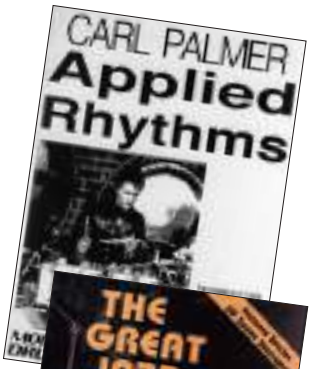

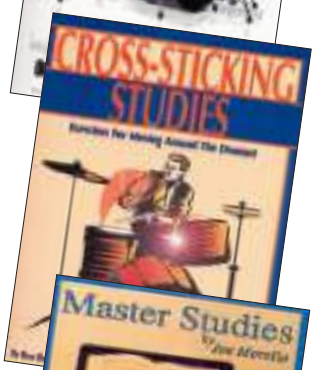

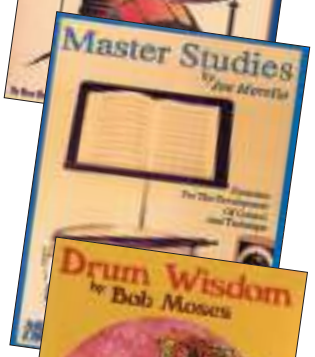

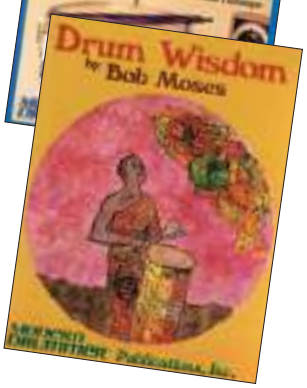

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9 Terry Bozzio/Chad Wackerman
Alternative Duets/Private Conversations (Slam International)

The recordings on this two-volume set highlight the intimate musical connection between Terry Bozzio and Chad Wackerman, and the potential for drums and percussion to provide the hook as well as the groove. Songs are titled by the city, state, and date recorded. Each contains fine examples of melodic drumming, one player setting up the foundation with space to spare, and the other delivering thoughtful solo parts on top with tuned percussion, bells, and cymbals. Bozzio and Wackerman dive into powerful unison parts, and then fall into lulls that give breath. This is not a chops fest. These guys are playing *songs*. It's intriguing to hear the melodies introduced, then built up into thunderous, joyful, highly evolved orchestrations. (P.O. Box 163005, Austin, TX 78716, www.terrybozzio.com) **Robin Tolleson**

7 Tommy Lee Never A Dull Moment (MCA)

Tommy sings! (And you thought his piano on Mötley Crüe's "Home Sweet Home" revealed the depth of his extra-drumming talents.) If Lee's people market this thing right, it could make a serious splash among fans of radio-friendly, hip-hop-influenced hard rock. It's way more guitar-driven—by *Tommy's* guitar—than his Methods Of Mayhem project, which should appeal to diehard Crüe lovers. Catchy melodies, slamming grooves, power ballads, bitchin' tones—the guy hasn't spent twenty-plus years as a rock star without learning some serious craft. Drums take a backseat as Lee finds his way around the six-string, but the meaty beats are all there. And his macho croon is pretty good! **Michael Parillo**

7 Steve Morse Band Split Decision (Magna Carta)

The Dixie Dregs, led by guitarist Steve Morse, developed a new southern rock–flavored direction for fusion in the late '70s. Morse has continued his unique brand of technically challenging rock, backed by the solid drum work of **VAN ROMAINE**, for over a decade. Here Romaine holds his own and supports this heavy instrumental rock with taste and well-placed chops. **Mike Haid**

8 Medeski Martin And Wood Uninvisible (Blue Note)

MMW know how to throw a party—and they invite all the hippest guests. Featuring appearances by artists as diverse as **Col. Bruce Hampton**, **Eddie Bobe**, **DJ Olive**, and the **Antibalas** horns, *Uninvisible* is one of the organ trio's funkiest LPs yet. Though the spirit of improvisation continues to drive the group's performances and inspire its compositions, MMW's jazz roots are now overgrown with a super-funky, psychedelic moss. Virtually every move **BILLY MARTIN** makes is intended to get you to shake that thang, so fills and drum breaks are stripped away until all that remains is the essence of groove. **Michael Parillo**

7 Mahmoud Fadl The Drummers Of The Nile Go South (Piranha)

Percussionist **MAHMOUD FADL** revisits his Nubian heritage, channeling the thrilling rhythms of the Nile. Here the busy drummer applies his pan-Arabic/pan-African sounds to everything from traditional music to club/dance tracks. In these stripped-down cuts, it's a treat to hear exposed drums up front, joined by occasional stringed instruments and vocals. Drummers will also appreciate the liner text identifying each rhythm. In Fadl's magical hands, the intoxicating, sinuous grooves resonate with the majesty and mystery of the history he's conjuring. And check out how much music can be made from hand claps and spoons! **Jeff Potter**

KICKIN' OUT THE NEW

Solid and personable, Hybrasil's **JEFF BERLIN** lays down the beat with great fluidity and an equal sense of fun. Berlin's playing is marked by a natural swing that generally can't be learned. He's a natural! Featuring a very hi-fi kit, minimal percussive tools, and a big fat snare, *The Kicker* is a well-recorded and fun album to play along with. (Lunch)

Playing with great precision, **MICHAEL SCHORR**'s orchestration of parts on Death Cab For Cutie's *The Photo Album* is the signature of a thinking drummer. With near-perfect timing, Schorr's every move is well-thought-out, whether precisely placing open hi-hats or riding the toms. Even Schorr's moments of rocking out are executed with great control. (Barsuck)

With a more "garage" feel to the kit, The New Pornographers' *Mass Romantic* is marked by a retro-'60s pop style: straightforward beats and simple fills. Poppy and a little sloppy at times, the style nonetheless complements what the band is trying to accomplish. Never complex, drummers **KURT DAHLE** and **FISHER ROSE** hold down the songs with a sense of days gone by. (Mint) **Fran Azzarto and Lisa Crouch**

WHAT IN THE WORLD

Piranha Records has blasted onto the scene with some great world music releases in the past year or so. Boris Kovac & Ladaaba Orchest is a hot six-piece that takes listeners to many different places on *The Last Balkan Tango*. Kovac himself is from the Pannonian region of Southeast Europe. There are references here to the Klezmer sound, as well as music from Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, and Turkey. Nice drumming from **ISTVAN CIK (PICU)**. Rollicking and sensual.

The latest disc from "Godfather Of Nubian Soul" Ali Hassan Kuban, was recorded at the El Araby studio on the west bank of the Nile river. *Real Nubian* is Cairo wedding music at its best: lots of call & response, wonderful bass guitar by **Bibi Hammond**, darabukka by **HASSAN MACHMUD SAID HALIM**, and bongos by **SAMIR GOMAA**.

Brasil Allstars' *Sons Da Terra* is a powerful collection recorded live at Berlin's HeimatKlänge (People's Noise) Festival 2000 during the Brazil 500 celebration. Unbelievable percussion on every track (Brazil's trademark). All royalties go to a foundation to benefit street kids worldwide **David Licht**

8 Screaming Headless Torsos Live (independent)

This is some wild, edgy stuff! Think Living Colour meets Frank Zappa, with a sprinkling of Hendrix. Recorded live at New York's Knitting Factory in 1996, this original material is zany and loose, though the playing is solid and creative. The funky, hard-edged drumming of **GENE LAKE** combined with the fiery percussion from **DANIEL SADOWNICK** gives this exploratory vocal music a thick and energetic foundation. (www.torsos.com) **Mike Haid**

4 Bernard Purdie King Of The Beat (Purdie Good Co.)

The backbone behind classic sessions with artists ranging from Aretha Franklin to Steely Dan, "Pretty" Purdie wouldn't have to pick up his sticks ever again to be ensured of a righteous place in pop and R&B history. That's why *King Of The Beat* is so hard to figure. For someone of BP's stature, the drums should've been recorded like cannons. Instead they have that '80s towel-over-the-drumhead sound. Instead of pure pocket, we're asked to sit through sappy love songs and hokey disco arrangements. And nothing sounds like it was recorded in the last fifteen years. Purdie's versatility is evident here, and he plays some nice parts, but look for your classic Bernard elsewhere. **Robin Tolleson**

7 Gruvis Malt . . . With The Spirit Of A Traffic Jam (Lakeshore)

It's no wonder this six-piece fusionoid outfit dubs their mix of hip-hop, jazz, funk/metal, and astral lounge "futurock." Crammed with Motown-ish horns, wandering vocal lines, DJ scratches, and rolling retro keys, these songs twist and rotate in their own chaotic orbit. Drummer **SKOT McPHAIL** must have the percussive equivalent of moon boots, because his rubbery swing feels, half-time backbeats, and intricate jagged-edged grooves keep things grounded. Not even the tricky 11/8 feel of "Aggression" sends him spiraling off course. This solid, eclectic debut signals greater things to come. **Will Romano**

6 BPM&M XtraKcts & ArtifaKcts (Papa Bear)

As King Crimson incorporates ideas from techno music into its ever-evolving sound, it's only fitting that someone takes Crimson snippets, chops them up, and rearranges them into a strange electronic hybrid. That someone happens to be the group's drummer, **PAT MASTELOTTO**, along with his knob-tweaking pal Bill Munyon. The results often sound like way-out jams by Crimson or one of its side ProjeKcts. Some of it might get 'em dancing at a rave, but much of it forgoes repetitive, accessible beats in favor of wacky soundscapes. Part of the fun for diehards will be recognizing familiar bits in a new context. (www.papabear.com) **Michael Parillo**

TWO HANDS AND FEET AT A TIME

This past May, in the review of the Antibalas Afrobeat Orchestra's *Talkatif*, we mistakenly reported that drummers **DYLAN FUSILLO** and **PHIL BALLMAN** played together on the CD. In fact, Fusillo is featured alone on drumset on the title track, and Ballman plays drumset on the rest of the disc. "I only hope this revelation doesn't get our 8-star rating reduced!" laughs Ballman. On the contrary. More props to both of you for "single-handedly" making the album burn.

BOOKS

10 Polyrhythms: The Musician's Guide by Peter Magadini (Hal Leonard)

level: all, $19.95 (with CD)

If you're unfamiliar with this book, you ought to get acquainted, because it's a lot of fun and will open many doors. This revised second edition combines the original two books under one cover and includes a demonstration CD. Starting with the most basic polyrhythm, three against two, Magadini shows you how it fits together and how to play it, and then builds it up by adding 8ths, 16ths, and triplets. Next comes three against four, five against four, and so on, until you're playing with seven, eleven, and thirteen against the beat. The exercises and solos are challenging at each stage while helping the polyrhythms flow naturally. Recommended for any musician interested in rhythm—and *crucial* for drummers—this is still the best instructional book on the subject. **Martin Patmos**

6 Tipbook Series: Drums by Hugo Pinksterboer (Hal Leonard)

level: beginner to advanced, $9.95

Accurate and up-to-date information here, about topics like how drums are made, heads and sticks, hardware, buying drums, and drum maintenance. By accessing the book's Web site, you can get further audio and visual explanation about setting drums up and tuning them. There's little about learning to *play* drums here. Nevertheless, if I were a beginning drummer, I would devour this book cover to cover. **Robin Tolleson**

9 Drums For Dummies by Jeff Strong (Hungry Minds)

level: all, $24.99

Jeff Strong's *Drums For Dummies* contains more information on drums and percussion within its glue-bound 345 pages and companion CD-ROM than any other book/CD that's come across my desk. After being treated to an incredibly concise historical introduction to the world of percussion, readers are given a quick tutorial on musical notation as well as commonly used drumming definitions. Strong even addresses the concept of warming up via some simple exercises. All this good stuff is within the first 56 pages. The *meat* of the book covers techniques on instruments ranging from the snare drum to the udu and everything in between. Not many percussion instruments are overlooked here. After the basics are covered, Strong gets a little more detailed with chapters ranging from Getting Into The Groove to Tuning And Maintaining Your Drum. Though it's priced to sell and extremely easy to digest, this book is definitely *not* just for dummies. **Fran Azzarto**

6 66 Drum Solos For The Modern Drummer by Tom Hapke (Cherry Lane)

level: beginner to intermediate, $16.95 (with CD)

For drummers seeking fluency on the kit in many styles, this book contains a series of good workouts, solid introductions to letting rip in rock, funk, blues, fusion, and jazz. They will help reading skills and allow for more confident, intelligent improvisation. A drummer cozy with these solos—from shuffle to hard rock to 7/8—won't be caught off guard when a bandleader turns around and points his or her way. **Robin Tolleson**

7 Drumset Essentials Vol. 1 by Peter Erskine (Alfred)

level: beginner, $19.95 (with CD)

A beginner's book that's not necessarily just for kids, Erskine's smart, friendly self-help manual doesn't talk down. Hand/foot techniques, coordination, head tuning, and elementary beats and variations are covered. But Erskine also injects conceptual fare such as getting a good sound and thinking musically. The play-along CD has excellent instrumental tracks, simple yet sophisticated. The bulk of the book features track notation and charts. Unfortunately, after only a brief explanation of note values, these pages may need a teacher's aid. In sum, it's a fine book for fledglings that avoids the dry lifelessness of many primers. **Jeff Potter**

DVDS

8 Queensrÿche Live Evolution (Sanctuary)

Featuring classic tracks and a few rarities, *Live Evolution* is made for fans, but it's a good introduction for neophytes as well. **SCOTT ROCKENFIELD**'s distinctive drumming is dead-on, keeping the beat locked down while accenting and setting up riffs. Songs like "Eyes Of A Stranger" and "Empire" highlight his style, while "Lady Wore Black" and "Screaming In Digital" help show how he got there. Informative interview segments feature all the bandmembers commenting on the show and group history. The only real downside here is that there isn't as much footage from behind the kit as we might like. **Martin Patmos**

To order any of the books or videos reviewed in this month's *Critique,* 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, call BookNow at (800) BOOKS-NOW (266-5766) or surf to www.clicksmart.com/moderndrummer. (A handling charge may be added, according to product availability.)

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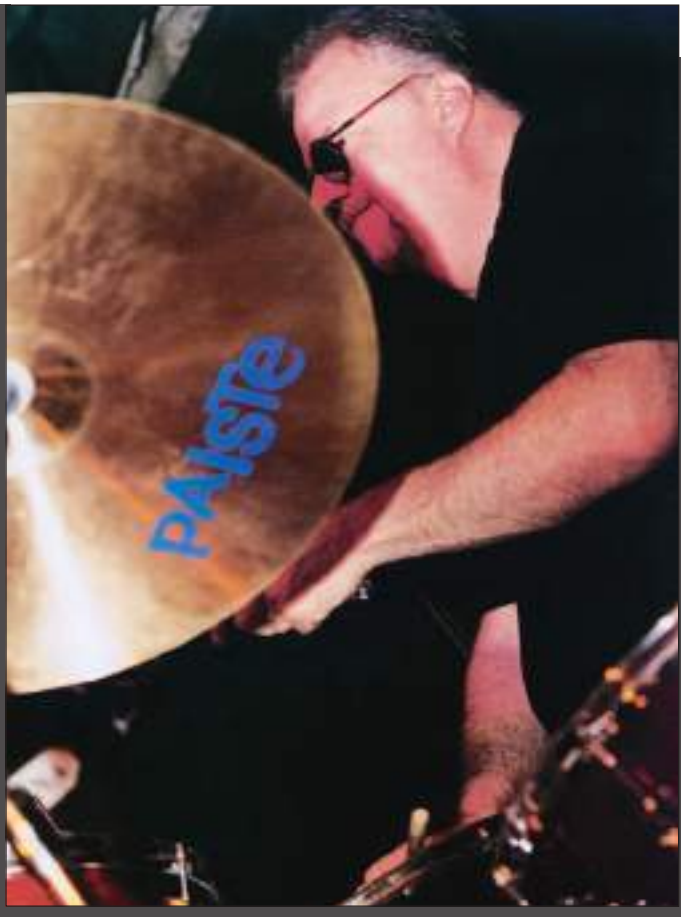
In Memoriam

Claudio Slon

Brazilian drumming great Claudio Slon died on April 16 after a brief battle with cancer. Only a few months earlier Claudio had been injured in an automobile accident, and it was during follow-up medical tests on his injured liver that the cancer was discovered. Regrettably, his condition was too far advanced for effective treatment.

In his thirty-plus-year career, Claudio worked with a who's who of Brazilian, jazz, and pop music artists, including Frank Sinatra, Sergio Mendes, Herbie Hancock, Dave Grusin, Astrud Gilberto, Joe Pass, Billy Eckstine, Stan Getz, Barry White, The Jacksons, and Antonio Carlos Jobim. His style was fluid, grooving, and always musical. Other Brazilian drummers cite him as their greatest influence, crediting him with having "the greatest feel of them all." Claudio was profiled just a few months ago, in the February 2002 *MD*.

Medical and funeral costs have staggered Claudio's family, and any financial assistance would be greatly appreciated. Donations can be made to the Claudio Slon Donation Fund, Wells Fargo Bank, 12601 W. 32nd Ave., Wheat Ridge, CO 80033, Account #1007273459, Routing #102000076. Deposits can be accepted at any Wells Fargo location.



Ronnie Verrell

Noted British drummer Ronnie Verrell died at his home in Kent, England on February 22, one day after his seventy-sixth birthday. His death was attributed to complications following an injury he had suffered several months earlier.

Ronnie had an extensive career as a show and studio drummer. His versatility made him the first-call drummer for the Ted Heath, Syd Lawrence, and Jack Pernell orchestras, as well as for performers as varied as Nat "King" Cole, Tom Jones, Dusty Springfield, Stephane Grappelli, Yehudi Menuhin, Shirley Bassey, and Peggy Lee.

But Ronnie leaves behind an even greater claim to fame. He may be one of the most-heard drummers of all time—even though those who heard him didn't know who they really were listening to. When millions of people around the world chuckled at the wild, abandoned playing of legendary Muppet drummer "Animal" on TV's *The Muppet Show* in the 1980s, it was Ronnie wielding the sticks. This unique gig was the focus of an article on Ronnie that appeared in *Modern Drummer*'s October 1983 issue.

Star Drummers Help Celebrate Chick Corea's Birthday Bash

Chick Corea and friends from his musical past recently joined in a series of concerts at New York's famous Blue Note jazz club, in celebration of Chick's sixtieth birthday. Among the participants were several Yamaha drummers who were happy to talk about their relationship with Chick.

Roy Haynes made two appearances during the series: as part of the *Now He Sings, Now He Sobs* Trio with bassist Miroslav Vitous, and in the re-created "Bud Powell Band" with bassist Christian McBride, saxophonist Joshua Redman, and trumpeter Terrence Blanchard. Members of the original Akoustic Band reunited during the second week of shows, with a lineup that included bassist John Patitucci and drummer **Dave Weckl**. During the third week, the *Three Quartets* Band featured saxophonist Michael Brecker, bassist Eddie Gomez, and drummer **Steve Gadd**.

Chick Corea and Roy Haynes unite for the first time in three years during Chick's sixtieth-birthday series. Their musical relationship dates to the 1960s.

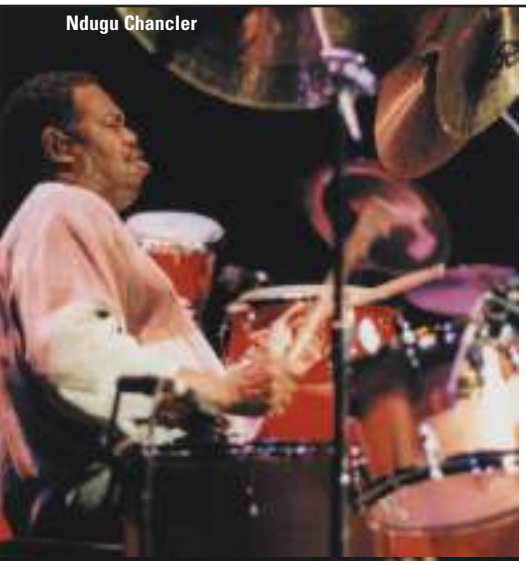
Chick checks out the drums while Dave Weckl supervises.

"I've worked with Chick off and on since the 1960s," commented Haynes. "These concerts are our first project in three years, since we did Gary Burton's CD. Chick and I have different philosophies regarding music, but we always manage to find a common ground."

Weckl noted, "My only regret is that I don't get to gig with Chick enough. I've enjoyed a long musical relationship with him, but this is the first time in about ten years that we've been able to play together."

The Three Quartets Band (from left): Corea, Michael Brecker, Eddie Gomez, and Steve Gadd.

Columbus Percussion Drum Daze


Ndugu Chancler

Richie Gajate-Garcia

Stanton Moore

Columbus Percussion's seventh Drum Daze festival took place on March 10 at the Capital Theatre in downtown Columbus, Ohio. The annual event brings top professional drummers and percussionists to Columbus for a day of performances and clinics.

Stanton Moore opened the program with a brief history of New Orleans drumming and how it influenced jazz, big band, R&B, and rock. Highlights included Stanton's funky press rolls and the gigantic sound of his 26" auxiliary bass drum.

Although **Richie Gajate-Garcia**'s drums filled most of the stage, his clinic focused on groove. Whether he played congas, drumset, timbales, or a pair of maracas, he did so in service to the music.

Ndugu Chancler began his performance with a solo that showcased his drumset abilities. Later, when he played with jazz and R&B tracks, he displayed an energy and enthusiasm that was both entertaining and inspiring. He then spoke of the importance of playing what the music requires, and of his experiences as a studio musician, producer, and composer.

Omar Hakim performed on a Roland V-Session electronic drumset. Praising the drums for providing "a new set of colors for drummers to work with," Omar demonstrated their capabilities with songs composed and performed entirely on the V-Session kit.

Kenny Aronoff exploded onto the stage, playing to tracks he's recorded with Michelle Branch, Alice Cooper, Billy Corgan, and more. He spoke of his experiences in the studio, comparing and contrasting his approaches to playing in a Pro Tools session versus a live band situation. After Kenny's closing solo, he was joined by the rest of the day's performers for a high-energy jam session.

Columbus Percussion would like to thank the following companies for their support: Bosphorus, Gretsch, Remo, Vic Firth, Sabian, Latin Percussion, Inc., Drum Workshop, Yamaha, Paiste, Roland, Tama, Zildjian, and *Modern Drummer*.

Omar Hakim

Kenny Aronoff

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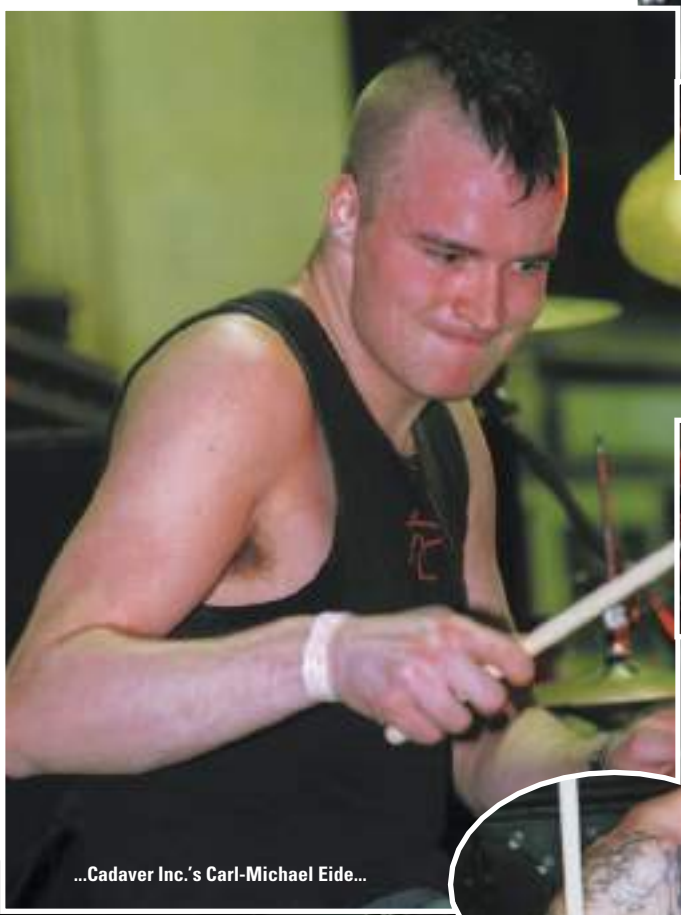
Metal Meltdown 2002

photos by Joseph Delconzo

The fourth annual Metal Meltdown returned to Asbury Park, New Jersey this past April 5 and 6. The event was a weekend of high-speed, high-intensity and high-volume performances by metal and hardcore bands of every description. Drumming stalwarts anchoring this musical assault included...

...Blitzkrieg's Phil Brewis...



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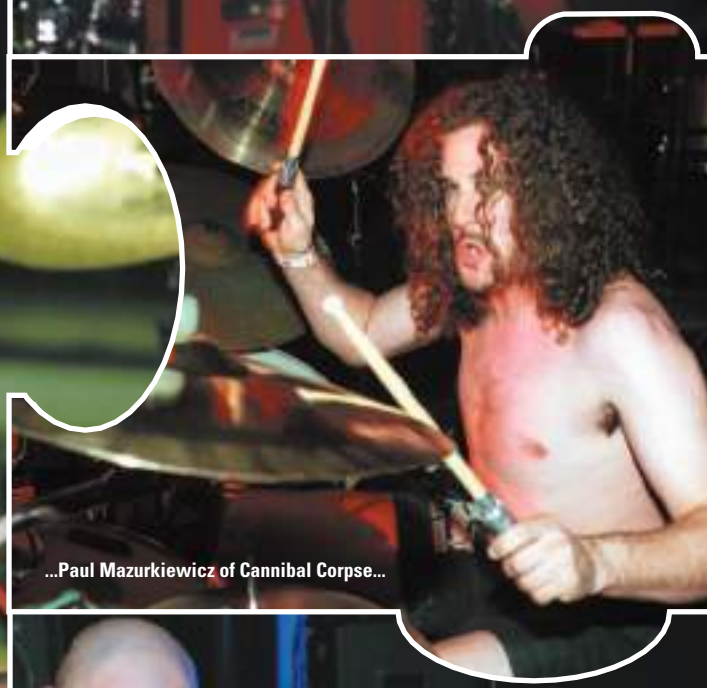
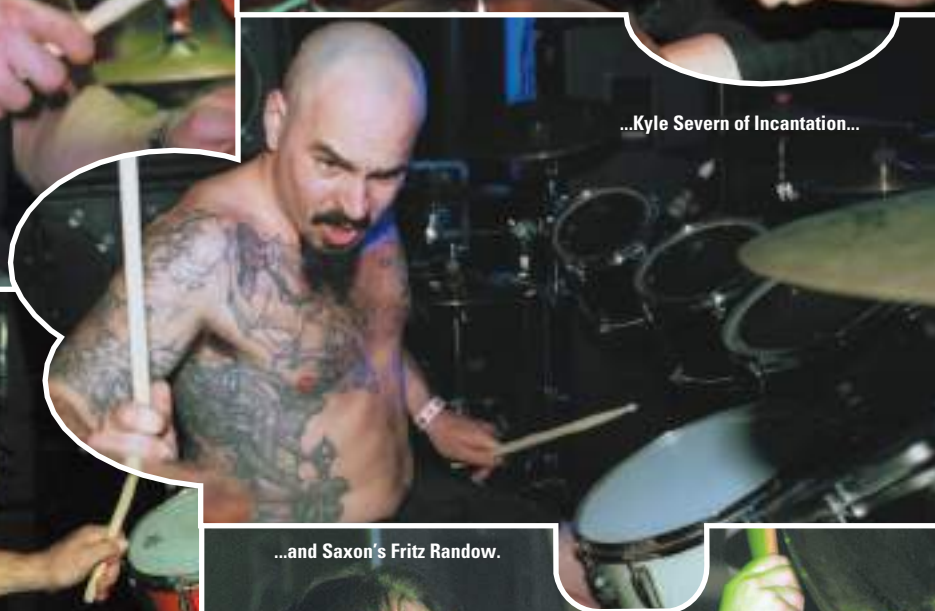
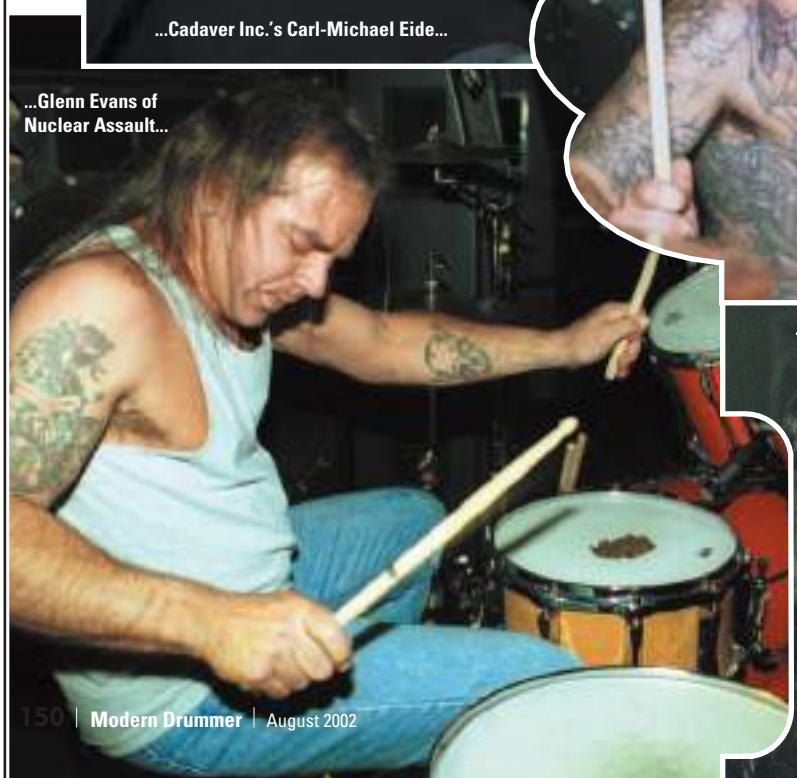


...Paul Mazurkiewicz of Cannibal Corpse...



...Kyle Severn of Incantation...



...Glenn Evans of Nuclear Assault...

...and Saxon's Fritz Randow.

INDY QUICKIES

Earlier this year, *Modern Drummer* and fifty other international music magazines were asked to vote for the best products of 2001/2002 to receive the **Musikmesse International Press Awards (MIPA)**. The following percussion-category winners were announced at the awards ceremony held during the Musik Messe in Frankfurt, Germany this past March.

Acoustic Drumset: **Yamaha** Oak Custom Drums; Cymbals: **Sabian** HHX Evolution Series; Hardware: **Sonor** Giant Step Twin Effect Pedal; Drumsticks: **Vic Firth** Blades; Drumheads: **Remo** NuSkyn Heads; Percussion Instrument: **Meinl** Professional Series Wood Congas; Electronic Drums: **Roland** TD-6K Electronic Drumset; Drum Microphone: **Shure** Beta 98. *Modern Drummer* offers congratulations to the winning manufacturers. We also congratulate Ikutaro Kakehashi, founder of Roland Corporation, who was presented with the MIPA Lifetime Achievement Award.

Rick Watts is a drummer and the host for a new radio program called **Drum Radio** on WVOX 1460 AM radio in New York City that airs between 6:00 and 7:00 P.M. Eastern time on Monday nights. Watts started the program to provide a voice for what drummers, famous and not so famous, have to say. Besides the radio broadcast, the program can also be heard on the Web at www.DrumRadio.com. Click the link and download the show every Monday. Drummers are invited to join in the show by calling (914) 636-0110. (Be sure to time your call correctly.) Or you can email the show any time at drumradio1@aol.com. All emails will be answered, and good questions will be read and answered on the air.

Also new on the Internet is **www.drumsmith.com**, a site said to be "a friendly public forum dedicated to bringing drummers and percussionists together with those who design, build, buy, or sell drums." Hosted by Ronn Dunnett and Andy Knifel, the free site is sponsored by a small group of industry professionals interested in maintaining a dialog within the global drumming community. Input from members is encouraged, and questions will be fielded by "some of the most knowledgeable people in the industry." Planned projects include contests, interviews with drum builders, live chats with high-profile artists, product reviews, NAMM show reviews, a buy & sell area, and more.

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RICK MAROTTA (SESSION GREAT)

Rick Malkin

What are some of your favorite grooves?
Bernard Purdie on "Rock Steady" (Aretha Franklin), Jim Keltner on *Paradise & Lunch* (Ry Cooder), Jerry Marotta on "Galileo" (The Indigo Girls), Steve Gadd on "Late In The Evening" (Paul Simon), and David Garibaldi on "What Is Hip" (Tower Of Power).

What do you listen to in your car, and what car are you driving?
Trance Planet (four CD set), Baba Maal, Joe Cocker's *Mad Dogs And Englishmen*, John Mayer's *Room For Squares*, Vertical Horizon's *Everything You Want*, and Coldplay's *Parachutes*. I drive a 2002 Lexus RX-300.

If you could put an imaginary super band together, who would be in it?
Bass: Neil Stubenhaus, Will Lee, Tony Levin, and Larry Kline. Guitar: Mike Landau, Larry Carlton, David Spinozza, Ross Bolton, and Hugh McCracken. Keyboards: Billy Payne, Bruce Hornsby, Herbie Hancock, and Leon Russell. Tenor sax: Michael Brecker. Alto sax: David Sanborn. Duduk: Djavan Gasparian. Percussion: Michael Fisher and Ralph MacDonald. Drums: Jerry Marotta, Jim Keltner, Steve Gadd, and Jay Bellerose. Vocals: Alison Krauss, Peter Gabriel, Toni Childs, Keith Richards, and Sheila Chandra.

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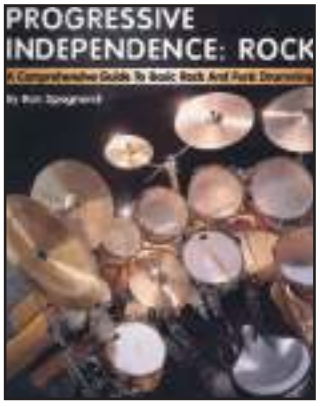

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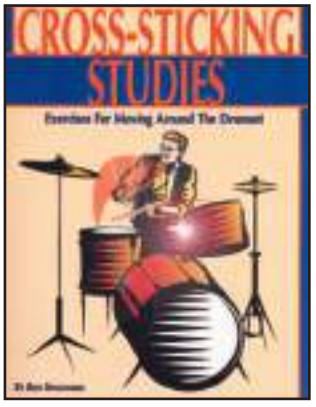

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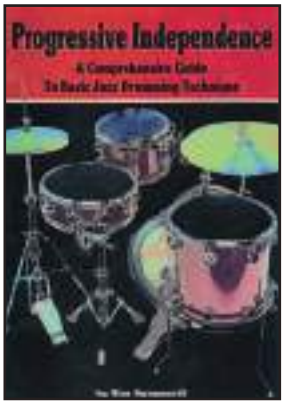

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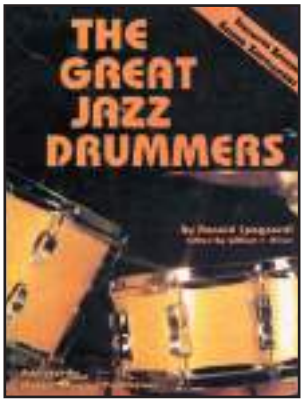

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drumkit of the month

This classic 1942 Slingerland Rolling Bomber kit has been lovingly restored by Thomas Fitch of Kingsland, Georgia. Among its unique features are rosewood lugs and rims, made necessary by government restrictions on metal usage during World War II.

The kit consists of a 9x13 rail-mounted rack tom, a 12x14 floor tom mounted on a cradle instead of legs, a 14x26 bass drum, and a 1936 $6\frac{1}{2}$x14 Radio King snare drum with Beavertail lugs and a three-point strainer. All shells are original with only factory-drilled holes.

After removing the original gold sparkle covering, Thomas had to do some repair work on the shells. He then had the bass drum and toms professionally re-covered by Precision Drum Company. (He covered the snare himself.) He chose a Bermuda Sand wrap to complement the rosewood lugs and rims. The artwork on the front bass drum head duplicates that of a head that Gene Krupa put on his set in 1943 to promote the sale of war bonds.

Best of all, the kit isn't just for show. Thomas performs on it regularly with the Jekyll Island Big Band. "The drums sound great," he says. "They actually replicate the big band drum sound of the 1940s. That boomy bass drum and the Radio King snare just say it all."

PHOTO REQUIREMENTS

1. Photos must be high-quality and in color. 35mm slides are preferred; color prints will be considered; Polaroids not accepted. 2. You may send more than one view of the kit. 3. Only show drums, no people. 4. Shoot drums against a neutral background. Avoid "busy" backgrounds. 5. Clearly highlight special attributes of your kit. Send photo(s) to: Drumkit Of The Month, Modern Drummer, 12 Old Bridge Road, Cedar Grove, NJ 07009-1288. Photos cannot be returned.

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